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Victims, heroes, perpetrators: German art reception and its re-construction of National Socialist persecution

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Abstract: Shortly after World War II, the German artists Horst Strempel and Hans Grundig created works that depicted National Socialist persecution. Strempel painted the triptych Night over Germany *(1945/46), and Grundig worked on the same subject twice, called* Victims of Fascism *(1946/47) and* To the Victims of Fascism *(1947/49). They combined their own experiences as persecuted Communists with images from liberated concentration camps and those derived from Christian icons, creating paintings that shift between testimony and invention. As semi-fictional and semi-autobiographical accounts of the past, these artworks have caused art critics to develop their own views on National Socialist persecution for the last seven decades.*

Within newspapers, art journals and exhibition catalogues, Night over Germany *was widely received and reviewed in the late 1940s in Allied-occupied Germany and in the late 1970s in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), triggering a discussion on German guilt during both periods. In the GDR, Grundig's* Victims *paintings came to be regarded as major examples of antifascist art. Since 1990 art historians have referred to all three artworks as important examples of confronting and thereby allegedly overcoming National Socialism. What they, however, did not address was the history of the reception of these paintings, which, like the paintings, contributed to and shaped the post-war discourse on National Socialist persecution.*

In order to close the research gap on art reception as an active part of a larger political discourse on German National Socialism, this article examines the formation of narratives on National Socialist persecution. It traces the most influential terms and concepts, placing them in close connection with their historical and political contexts. In doing so, it shows how German art reception participated in the re-construction of National Socialist history since the end of World War II and reveals the amount of fiction involved. Comparing the critical writings with the subject matter of all three paintings, it shows the negligence the artworks have met with and disproves the success of the highly acclaimed German 'self-reflection'.

Introduction

'Most people are indifferent to the existence of concentration camps. To them, accounts of the horrors seem exaggerated and propaganda' (Grundig 1946, 118).[1] Here, the artist Hans Grundig (1901-1958) explains his decision to produce two large-scale paintings on his 'concentration camp period', *Victims of Fascism* (1946/47) and a second version *To the Victims of Fascism* (1947/49) (Figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1: Hans Grundig, Opfer des Faschismus I (Victims of Fascism) 1946/47, oil on hardboard, 110x200cm, Museum der bildenden Künste Leipzig © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2016.

Figure 2: Hans Grundig, Opfer des Faschismus II (To the Victims of Fascism) 1947-49, oil on hardboard, 110x200cm, Galerie Neue Meister Dresden © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2016.

Before Grundig, Horst Strempel had painted National Socialist persecution in a triptych with a predella, *Night over Germany* (1945/46) (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Horst Strempel, Night over Germany ('Nacht über Deutschland', 1945/46, oil on canvas, central panel 150x168cm, wings 150x78 cm, predella 79x168 cm, Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin (Saure 1992, plate 7). Reproduced by permission.

Directly after the war, both artists fused together their own experience as persecuted Communists with documentary photographs and footage shot in liberated concentration camps and motifs inspired by Christian iconography, activating the dividing line between testimony and invention.

Grundig's wife Lea (1906-1977) was persecuted both as a Jew and a Communist, and had fled Germany in 1939. Grundig was imprisoned in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp and in one of its satellites in Berlin, until he and his fellow prisoners escaped forced war deployment in Hungary in 1944. In Moscow Grundig underwent 'antifascist training' and studied the Stalinist party program to prepare for his return to post-war Germany in 1946 (Hirche and Seifert 1988, 54-57).

Both his large oil paintings show two prisoners in the foreground lying on a gold ground in front of a concentration camp wall with black birds flying around them and above. In the background of both paintings, pine trees and buildings refer to Sachsenhausen Camp, as does the number '18061' on the leg of the figure in the foreground in both Figures 1 and 2. This is the number that the artist himself had to wear during his forced imprisonment (Grundig 1957, 318).

In Figure 1 there is a red concentration camp badge next to the number, marking the figure whose upper body is covered with blue cloth as a 'political prisoner'. In Figure 2 the red badge is replaced by a yellow and red Star of David-shaped badge, marking the figure as a "Jewish political prisoner". Here the prisoner covers his bleeding face with his hand. In both versions, the second prisoner is lying on his back partly covered in red cloth, and it is unclear if he is dead or alive. In Figure 2, he is the one who is marked as a 'political prisoner' and wears the fictive number '43210'.

Grundig also commemorated three friends in these paintings, who had been murdered as prisoners during the National Socialist era, or who had died after their imprisonment. In 'To the Victims of Fascism', Figure 2, Grundig framed their names with red badges in a painted inscription which appears in the bottom border of the painting: 'HELEN ERNST CRISTEL BEHAM FRITZ SCHULZE'. By referring to actual cases of persecution, Grundig established the credibility of his paintings, despite their surrealist mood and the compositional references to the Entombment of Christ. He added additional historical accuracy by referencing photographs of concentration camps and their exposure of the mass graves.

Similarly, Horst Strempel combined contemporary footage and photographs of concentration camps with scenes from the Biblical Way of the Cross in a composition dominated by black and white colors. Figure 3, 'Night over Germany', shows inmates in a concentration camp and a prison next to Jewish and non-Jewish people in hiding. The central panel depicts several prisoners in front of a concentration camp.

While both central figures, one standing in restraint and the other one sitting next to him, do not reference a particular iconic prototype, the depiction of three children with tattooed arms to the right of the central figures references a scene from the film *Death Mills* produced in 1945 (Hoffmann-Curtius 2014, 27). The film was produced by the United States Department of War to confront Germans with the crimes committed in National Socialist concentration camps, and in one scene it shows children in Auschwitz who present their tattooed arms to the camera.

The prisoners depicted in the background on the right side of the composition, pulling a wagon and carrying huge stones, reference forced labour as well as the bearing of the Cross. The prisoner hanging on the fence in the left midground references both the crucifixion of Christ and photographs of concentration camp prisoners attempting to flee.

In contrast, the Jewish family in the right panel, three figures in a dark space in the left panel and the prisoners on the predella crouching in prison cells do not reference established iconic imagery. In the left panel, a woman is kneeling in front of the silhouettes of two figures, covering her mouth with her hand. In

the right panel, a man and a woman, marked as Jews by a yellow spot on their coats, are protecting a child. In the predella, one prisoner is sharing his food with another while the other inmates are passing messages.

Strempel (1904-1975), who like Grundig was also a Communist, emigrated to France as early as 1933. In 1939 he was detained in the Gurs Internment Camp, but in 1941 he returned to Germany. After a short imprisonment in a Gestapo prison in Berlin, he was forced to join the Wehrmacht. It still remains unclear why Strempel decided to come back to Germany, and where he had been stationed during the war. The only verified fact is that in 1945 he returned to Berlin where he joined several left-wing cultural organizations and taught at the East Berlin art college until he fled from the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1953 (Saure 1992, 67-69, 78-79; see also Feist, 1989).

Grundig and Strempel confronted their fellow Germans with crimes they had committed and those committed in their name. During the early post-war years, they were two of a small number of German artists who dealt with the topic of National Socialist persecution (see Hoffmann-Curtius, 2014). Judging by the number of newspaper and journal reviews *Night over Germany* received after being exhibited twice in 1947 (Saure 1992, 127-128), it must have been the most discussed recent artwork at that time. After Strempel fled the GDR, *Night over Germany* was stored in the National Gallery's depots in East Berlin, only to be 'rediscovered' in the GDR after Strempel's death in 1975. The painting was included in the National Gallery's collection catalogue in 1976 (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin 1976, 73) and was discussed intensely by Karl Max Kober, an art historian who focused on art from the Soviet Occupation Zone and who managed to rehabilitate Strempel in 1977. Since Kober, a number of East and West German art historians have studied Strempel's work, but the single monograph on Strempel's oeuvre was only published in 1992.

The major success of Grundig's *Victims* paintings began in the year of the artist's death in 1958. These two paintings became probably the most acclaimed post-war artworks on National Socialism in the GDR. They were reproduced in textbooks, children's magazines and newspapers alike and discussed by art historians as well as by numerous journalists. They were exhibited regularly in the GDR and used as educational and propagandistic tools.

In the late 1970s both Strempel's and Grundig's paintings were studied in the GDR as exemplary works from the Soviet Occupation Zone of Germany, and since the 1990s they have been presented repeatedly as early artistic attempts to cope with National Socialist crimes. Being part of three important German art collections – with *Victims of Fascism* in the Museum der bildenden Künste in Leipzig, *To the Victims of Fascism* in Dresden's Gemäldegalerie Neue Meister and *Night over Germany* first in the National Gallery of the East and then in the Neue Nationalgalerie Berlin – these paintings have not only been exhibited regularly, but since the late 1970s they have also been included in

numerous publications on German art from the early post-war era (among many others see Donner 1979; Frankfurter Kunstverein 1980; Gillen 2009).

During the past twenty-five years, artistic depictions of National Socialist crimes have been discussed on several occasions. Ziva Amishai-Maisels published her key work on images from the Holocaust in 1993, James E. Young wrote about the younger generations' second-hand experience of the Holocaust in 2000, and in 2014 Kathrin Hoffmann-Curtius published a critical, comprehensive study on German artworks depicting National Socialist persecution completed between 1945 and 1963. Even though Hoffmann-Curtius also considered the impact that German 'Erinnerungskultur' (remembrance culture) has had on art production over the decades, she failed to deliver an analysis of the discussions caused by the artworks she presented, discussions which in turn have partaken in shaping 'Erinnerungskultur'.

As semi-fictional and semi-autobiographical accounts of the past all three artworks have caused art critics to develop their own narratives on National Socialism. As part of a bigger socio-cultural discourse their writings took part in the construction of national identities and collective memories. But how exactly did art critics react to the images of persecution? How did they, in newspaper articles, essays, catalogue entries and monographs, relate to the artworks in question? How big a role did historical facts and/or current political events play? And how much fiction was involved?

This article aims to close the research gap on art reception's re-constructions of National Socialist crimes. A chronological discourse analysis will help to examine the evolution of the most dominant narratives promoted by the reception of the paintings by Grundig and Strempel discussed above. This article will trace the most influential terms and concepts, show which purposes they serve, and what kind of power they possess. Finally, it will contextualize the reception of these paintings and reveal analogies and breaches with contemporary memorial discourses.

Denial versus appropriation

Even though Strempel did not paint any perpetrators, the reception of *Night over Germany* has consistently revolved around the question of German guilt. The writer of the first 1947 exhibition catalogue, Herbert Schiller, has been the only author so far to address personal and collective guilt directly (Schiller 1947, n.p.): 'which of us could say that he has overcome the dark time we have just left behind, who that he has worked through the guilt we have accumulated?'

In contrast to Schiller, in 1947 most commentators employed strategies of denial, ranging from suppression to victimization. Confronted with allied re-education campaigns and the Nuremberg trials, they anticipated generalized accusations (Frei 2005, 147). Instead of facing their own involvement with the

National Socialist regime, reviewers painted the picture of an innocent people suffering from the war, or they appropriated Strempel's triptych as an example of how to overcome the past. As a result, most reviewers ignored the factual depictions of a concentration camp and a prison.

The triptych's title may have offered critics the chance to exonerate themselves and their fellow citizens, since *Night Over Germany* quickly became a post-war figure of speech to describe National Socialism as a dark era with a population blinded by the people in power, unaware of the crimes being committed. Whatever the artist's intentions might have been, critics took the opportunity provided by the title to ignore their own involvement in National Socialism. Some put the sole blame on Hitler (Justi 1947, 5; Redslob 1947) while others declared all Germans to be victims of National Socialism (anon 1947a; anon 1947b; anon 1947c). In the newspaper *Rheinische Post*, affiliated with the Christian Democratic Union of Germany, one anonymous author changed the triptych's title to *Maltreated Germany* (anon 1947b), and in the East German trade union federation's newspaper *Tribüne* another anonymous contributor wrote about the 'past barbarism's concentration-camp atmosphere burdening us' (anon 1947c). The former victimized the German population as a whole, without directly blaming either the war or the National Socialist regime, while the latter invented a German people imprisoned by a barbaric system, the uncivilized, depersonalized Other. German persecutors, followers and bystanders took the place of the persecuted figures actually depicted by Strempel.

Before publishing his most influential essay on *Night over Germany* in the art journal *bildende kunst*, Hermann Müller contributed to the victimization narrative (Müller 1947a, n.p.):

> Do we remember the time when we crouched in the bunker, listening fearfully to the sound of sirens and motors, the explosions? Yes, we do remember. And we find it again captured in Horst Strempel's four-part image 'Night over Germany'.

Not only did Müller ignore the triptych's sole focus on scenes of imprisonment, like the other writers mentioned above he also constructed a collective suffering 'we' by imagining a bunker scene, that removed and buried the differences between German perpetrators, followers, bystanders and their victims. He exploited the fact that most Germans had been affected by the war in one way or another to, at least implicitly, absolve them.

Later in 1947, in *bildende kunst* Müller changed his approach slightly. Even though he misidentified the triptych's left panel as a bunker scene rather than the depiction of three figures in an unspecified dark space, he was the only author who in 1947 to mention the Jewish family depicted in the right panel. In addition, he described the central panel with its concentration camp barracks, a crucified-like prisoner in the centre, and the children's tattooed arms. Müller

also mentioned the prisoners in the predella who he interpreted as representatives of an immortal resistance movement (Müller 1947b, 32):

> The resistance movement. Behind bars, still making plans, working, thinking in their last hour. Knocks go from cell to cell, immortal conviction in the regime's death chambers. In the world of the living, there is the sound of the sirens. People are crouching in bunkers with fearful eyes and knotted hands. They stand in front of black walls, marked by yellow stars, grimly looking up, hoping desperately, that it could not be possible, that it cannot be possible, that maybe …

At first sight, it seems as if Müller had confronted the realities of National Socialist persecution, choosing empathetic words. But upon closer examination, his goal is revealed as exploiting the triptych for contemporary purposes. Like others, he appropriated the artist's attempt to deal with National Socialist crimes and used it as an example of successfully coming to terms with the past. To strengthen his point, he quoted two anonymous journalists from Denmark and Sweden (Müller 1947b, 32): 'Never before did they see a work of art that dealt with fascism as profoundly as this one. An artwork that even attempted to sum up this development'. Müller used the alleged approval of two journalists from 'neutral' countries to emphasize the ability of Germans to overcome the past and to appeal to a national and international public.

In addition to appropriating the artist's confrontation of the past, Müller referred to the resistance movement because it could serve to clear Germany's name. Declaring its immortality, he created a link between dead resistance fighters and living Germans who, through re-education, supposedly followed in the former's footsteps.

Müller recharacterized the victims depicted in Strempel's painting, and he identified with the Jewish family in hiding, fantasizing about their survival. He imagined a possible happy ending that had nothing to do with the realities of deportation and genocide and had everything to do with his intentions to present a reformed Germany, a country which through suffering could identify itself with its victims, incorporating the resistance movement and the fate of the persecuted alike.

In 1954 Wolfgang Hennig, a West German journalist who wrote for the conservative *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, picked up where Müller had left off and continued to construct a fiction of successful denazification. He described the international recognition that *Night over Germany* had gained, again without sharing his sources, and invented the topos of 'German self-reflection' which was to be referred to repeatedly (Hennig 1954): 'This "altar piece" has documented German self-reflection and has had a huge impact beyond our borders'.

Despite referencing a form of self-reflection, this journalist did not show any interest in actually coping with the past. He took advantage of the fact that

Strempel had been heavily criticized for his modernist style before he emigrated from the GDR, so as a West German conservative Hennig had this as a strong reason to criticize East German cultural politics. In the midst of the Cold War, his main objective was to attack the neighboring GDR. Hennig compared Strempel's problems with East German police forces with those he had had with the Gestapo and agreed with the contemporary conservative mainstream when he regarded Soviet socialism and National Socialism as equally totalitarian. In agreement with the general West German hush-hush attitude of the 1950s, he ignored past National Socialist crimes and focused on current conflicts, thus undermining real self-reflection (see Dubiel 1999, 176-177).

Victims and perpetrators

In 1977, East German art historian Karl Max Kober 'rediscovered' Strempel's triptych when he studied art from the Soviet Occupation Zone of Germany (Kober 1977, 216):

> A modern ghostly Golgotha is built up like an altarpiece, not with a crucified man at its centre but with a figure who could be a perpetrator or a victim, who could go down on his knees completely or still get up.

Kober agreed with those writers from 1947 who recognized Germany in the triptych, but instead of reinforcing victimization, he chose to discuss the central figure's status. He claimed that most Germans did not feel liberated at the end of World War II and concluded that Strempel would have depicted their mixed feelings (Kober 1977, 215-216):

> Objectively speaking, May 8, 1945 was a liberation day. But at first, to most people and artists May 8 has been a day of defeat, and the important changes in society have been overlaid by the horrifying discovery of fascist cruelties, by existential angst, insecurity, and hopelessness. At that time Germany was the only country not standing side by side with the victors, and even German Communists and antifascists could not enjoy their victory over barbarism without bitterness as progressive forces did not manage to prevent the disaster in 1933.

Kober adapted the excessively used topos of historical objectivity central to the East German interpretation of Marxist theory and turned it against the official understanding of history. Not only did he undermine the dictum of May 8th as the liberation day celebrated each year by state officials and the (willing or unwilling) population alike, he also dared to mention the failure of 1933 despite the fact that the antifascist victory had been one of the founding myths of the GDR. For different reasons, the German Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party did not manage to unite in their struggle against the National Socialist Party's rise to power in 1933. Alluding to that, Kober opposed the general tendency to ignore the fallibility of the Communist Party, while the official reading was that German antifascists had overcome their failures and prevailed over

National Socialism as members of the anti-Hitler coalition. The foundation of the GDR turned defeat into victory not only for the former enemies of National Socialism but for every German who was willing to identify with the new state, transforming the conquered guilty into innocent victors (see Danyel 1995, 42-46). In contrast to the GDR's official version of a German antifascist victory, Kober stressed the failures of the German antifascist movement as well as the wide-spread feeling of German defeat in 1945.

While Kober's understanding of history does not explain his ambiguous reading of Strempel's central figure, who after all is a concentration camp prisoner in restraint, to characterize him as a figure between guilt and innocence finally meant accepting the existence of at least an abstract form of German guilt. Unsurprisingly though, in his book on GDR art from 1982 Ullrich Kuhirt, another East German art historian, did not agree with Kober. His interpretation corresponded with the official reading of the end of World War II, namely with May 8, 1945, as a new beginning. In Kuhirt's opinion, the triptych represented Strempel's hopes for the future of his people, for salvation and his longing for peace (Kuhirt 1982, 48):

> The triptych represents the artist's thoughts on the fate and future of his people. His longing for peace and salvation from the darkness of the period is expressed vividly and shockingly. With its subject matter ranging from despair to hope the triptych is unique among the artworks that represent the situation at the new beginning.

Referring also to May 8th, the art historian Jörg Makarinus developed yet another reading in an exhibition catalogue in 1987. Based on the division between the foreground and background of the triptch's central panel, Makarinus described and traced the existence of a timeline. However, like Kober, he still did not manage to decide if the central characters represented prisoners or perpetrators (Makarinus 1987, 435):

> The triptych's central panel leads the viewer's gaze back to the nightmarish concentration camp barracks. In the foreground, separated from the past in time and space, signifying the situation after May 8, 1945, children raise their tattooed arms in an accusatory manner. The pose of two central figures acts as a warning. They represent degradation, pain, horror and guilt as the German people's Passion.

According to Makarinus, the composition is divided in past and present around May 8th , yet the tattooed children in Auschwitz had been liberated on January 27, 1947, three months before the Wehrmacht surrendered on May 8, 1945. Alluding to the Passion of Christ, the writer aligns his choice of words to Strempel's iconographic use of imagery. More importantly, describing National Socialist persecution with the metaphor 'Passion', Makarinus makes use of an established imagery which tamed the crimes by describing them in religious terms. As a consequence, he did not do the victims justice, as terms from the

New Testament belittle their suffering. In addition, when connecting the Passion to the Germans' 'degradation, horror, pain, and guilt' he replaced the victim by the offender and transformed guilt into suffering. Even if he did draw attention to the children's tattooed arms, he produced the image of a German people being the victim of its own crimes. Once again, he ignored the factual depiction of most of the persecuted figures and returned to the victimization narrative established in the post-war era.

As a result of the left-wing movement of the 1960s and 70s and in response to Kober's writings, West German art historians began to approach the topic of early post-war art. As a left-wing art historian opposing the GDR, Gabriele Schultheiß took on the task of analyzing *Night over Germany* in an exhibition catalogue on Realism after 1945 in 1980. She quoted Kober's 'Golgotha' to criticize Strempel for his 'mechanically reduced understanding of National Socialism and the conditions of its overcoming' (Schultheiß 1980, 15). In her opinion, the artist chose the shape of a triptych because of his salvation-historical interpretation of the past, with the predella's resistance fighters introducing the promise of salvation depicted on the central panel (Schultheiß 1980, 15):

> The crucified, sacrificed Jewish prisoner [the central figure] and the guardian, the fatherly leader of the solidary proletarian family in the right panel, are looking at the only open spot in a densely populated image space. Their orientation towards the sky means salvation, the end of terror and ascent into heaven as a necessity. The children's group, combatively raising their fists, appeals to the viewer with a certain belief: that within a gruesome reality lies a possibility for change.

Even though, unlike other reviewers, Schultheiß produced a detailed analysis, she misinterpreted the role of Strempel's protagonists – the central figure as a crucified Jew, the family as proletarians, and the children as fighters. Even if the sky lit up in the central panel, there is no compositional element suggesting that Strempel intended to depict salvation. In fact, *Night over Germany* shows scenes of imprisonment, suffering and death without a possible escape. Her undoubtedly justified questioning of the use of Christian iconography in the face of National Socialist persecution aside, Schultheiß's critique seems to be directed to the aforementioned East German fiction of an antifascist victory rather than to the artwork itself.

After the unification of Germany, most authors limited themselves to rephrasing Müller, Kober, Schultheiß and others (Gillen 2009, 64; May and Obenaus 2016, 250-255; Thomas 2002, 15). The art historian Gabriele Saure published the first monograph on Strempel in 1992 and combined different approaches (Saure 1992, 85):

> According to the traditional interpretation of the Golgotha scene, the central figure should be innocent or the symbol of unjust suffering. If Strempel had really only wanted to document 'German self-reflection'

> one cannot assume that he would have put a German in the centre at Calvary. Perhaps his goal was to criticize the population's self-pity. The indirect confrontation between those who really have suffered from the fascist system – concentration camp prisoners, political prisoners, forced labourers, Jews – and those who are put in the foreground, absent-minded and detached from the gruesome scenes in the background, speaks in favour of this assumption.

Instead of questioning Kober's 'Golgotha' or Hennig's 'self-reflection', Saure intertwined both ideas and presented a rather confusing interpretation of the triptych. According to her, 'self-reflection' meant putting a guilty German among victims, as if to confront the viewers with their self-pity in the face of mass murder and genocide. Saure tried to react to the changing public discourse on German guilt following the West German 'Historikerstreit' (historians' dispute) in the late 1980s. During the 'Historikerstreit', right-wing and left-wing intellectuals discussed the singularity of the Shoah and the question of German guilt. Saure agreed with the left-wing position which considered German guilt to be an undeniable, significant part of German history when she elaborated on Germans absorbed in self-pity after World War II. She differentiated between them and 'those who really have suffered', finally mentioning the depiction of forced labourers, prisoners and Jews, but she did not go beyond established interpretations. To emphasize her point, she still maintained the central figure's characterization as a German entangled in guilt, instead of conclusively questioning this view.

After the art historian Fritz Jacobi claimed in 1966 that National Socialist crimes came to be known only after the war (Jacobi 1996, 73), Hoffmann-Curtius acknowledged recent historical research and expanded on the topic of German guilt in 2014, facing the complicit behaviour of large parts of the German population (Hoffmann-Curtius 2014, 27): 'Strempel shows places a lot of Germans are being brought to during re-education. Places already known to those who lived nearby, having been their place of work and Sunday trip destination'. She revealed a blind spot that had been ignored for decades: the fact that Germans could and did know about the concentration camps, the forced labour camps, the prisons and the hospitals where mass murder took place. Surprisingly though, she kept wondering if the central character of *Night over Germany* represented a prisoner or a National Socialist German, exemplifying the power of Kober's narrative (Hoffmann-Curtius 2014, 28-29).

Most recently, *Night over Germany* has been the final piece in an exhibition on the National Gallery's history in Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin. In the first half of 2016 'Die schwarzen Jahre' (The black years) presented the collection's history during National Socialism, exhibiting works both from supporters and enemies of the National Socialist regime. The show concluded with Strempel's triptych, offering two possible endings. One, that the artwork marks the end of the National Socialist period and the beginning of a new era, as if German 'self-

reflection' had been as successful as some critics claimed in 1947, and two, that the artwork offers the chance to finally begin to cope with the past.

Victims as heroes

While *Night over Germany* had not been spoken of in the GDR since 1951, the beginning of the success of Grundig's *Victims* paintings coincided with the opening of the first national memorial site at Buchenwald concentration camp in 1958. Here, the GDR government presented its understanding of National Socialist persecution and drew up the guidelines on its commemoration. The most important and the only honoured victims were to be the antifascist resistance fighters led by the Communists. According to those guidelines, the antifascist fighters' death had been meaningful because socialism had triumphed over 'fascism' when the GDR had been founded (see Overesch 1995).

In response to the official reading of history, Grundig's paintings have been perceived repeatedly as 'memorial', 'cenotaph', 'tribute' or 'reminder', most of the time without further specifying what and who they commemorated (see Feist 1970, 6; Kober 1978, 4; Sander 1988, 22). Up until the 1960s their purpose was considered to engage the viewers. As Artur Dänhardt put it in 1958 (Dänhardt 1958): 'One has to stop in front of 'To the Victims of Fascism', one has to empathize, to think, and then one should take an oath: This past shall never return, but we have to do something so that it does not'.

Dänhardt, who had been imprisoned during National Socialism as a Social Democrat and who worked as a cultural functionary in the GDR, referred to the oath of Buchenwald taken by liberated prisoners in 1945. The oath contained the promise to eradicate National Socialism, bring the perpetrators to justice and create a socialist society, thus being an important text in the GDR's remembrance culture.

As strong as Dänhardt's plea might seem, the call to prevent the past from repeating itself remains vague. Even if critics mentioned Hans Grundig's imprisonment, they used terms such as 'hell' (Grundig 1964, 25), 'barbarism' (Feist 1958, 660) or 'diabolic' (Jahn 1961, 111) to describe National Socialist persecution, taming it with religion or labelling it as psychologically and socially deviant.

Consequently, over decades most authors described Grundig's prisoners as anonymous fighters who had died for the greater good. As Günter Bernhardt, the author of Grundig's catalogue raisonné, put it in 1966 (Bernhardt 1966, 385-386):

> The deep impact is a result of the singular and truthful representation of the fate of millions of victims of the brown terror, of their exemplary behaviour in resistance and in death. They herald the immortality of the

antifascists' great humanist fight during the fascist dictatorship in Germany.

Bernhardt glorified death, and also established the use of religious terminology in a socialist context when he referred to 'immortality', as Strempel's critic Müller had done twenty years earlier in the post-war period. Like Müller, Bernhardt used the artworks to strengthen the national identity and to counter notions of German guilt. The same mechanism was at work when the writer referred to antifascist fighters as 'millions of victims'. He drew the picture of a monumental German resistance movement that in fact had never existed – allowing his fellow citizens to identify with those fictive millions.

Following his lead, in the 1970s different writers spotted the promise of a socialist future in Grundig's paintings. They discovered the dawning of a new time on the horizon of *To the Victims of Fascism*, described the blue sky in *Victims of Fascism* as a future herald or claimed that Grundig's protagonists had broken down 'fascism' (Gärtner 1979, 63; Lammel 1974; Schiller 1979). These writers ignored the fact that Grundig had painted dead or dying prisoners and did not show any interest for his biography or that of the friends he commemorated. Instead, they used Grundig's paintings as vehicles to promote the GDR and its concept of antifascim.

In reaction to the awakening interest for concrete biographies (Hartewig 2001, 43), Grundig expert Günter Feist challenged the tradition of abstract commemoration in 1970. Even if he still juggled with terms like 'inferno' and 'martyrdom', he gave an account of Grundig's imprisonment, adding concrete biographical information to the discussion (Feist 1970, 6-8). Feist also confronted the concrete existence of National Socialist crimes (Feist 1970, 8):

> They had brought him where the strongly protected facade of normality did not have any significance anymore and the SS state's true nature exposed itself. Because the equally insane and criminal division of humans in 'Übermensch' and 'Untermensch' and of Germans in 'Volksgenossen' and 'Volksschädlinge' had swept away all scruples, all reminders of human dignity. They hunted and choked the alleged subhumans and vermin every day, not too fast because the work should still bring profit; not too slow because the camp was not to lose its intimidating reputation. Again and again, torture, humiliation, starvation, disease and exhaustion ended in ruin, death and murder.

Feist rephrased results that Eugen Kogon had published in his important book *The SS State: The System of the German Concentration Camps* in 1946 (Kogon 2012, 55-59). Influenced by Kogon, Feist based his analysis on historical research and called Grundig and the other prisoners Hitler's and Himmler's prisoners. He named two specific perpetrators from Sachsenhausen, Gustav Sorge and Wilhelm Schubert, a singular event both in Grundig's and Strempel's reception (Feist 1970, 7-8). He elaborated on National Socialist racism and anti-

Semitism as well as on the role of forced labour, considering it to be an important aspect of National Socialist persecution in accordance with Georgi Dimitrov's theory on fascism which focuses on the economic reasons for the rise of European fascist movements and German National Socialism.

Feist laid the grounds for art historian Dietulf Sander who in 1988 presented historical documents on Grundig's imprisonment (Sander 1988, 7-11). Sander finally quoted Grundig on Sachsenhausen after decades of abstract glorification. As he outlined, Grundig did not present himself as a heroic fighter. Instead, the artist reported the mistrust he met with when he arrived in Sachsenhausen, the other Communist prisoners avoiding him because of his sensitivity and vulnerability. Not only did Sander undermine the invention of the artist/hero, he also challenged the narrative of the (camp) resistance movement as a place for unlimited solidarity and unity and broke with the antifascist myth altogether.

Victims and heroes

Hans Grundig's wife Lea published several texts on *To the Victims of Fascism*, the most influential one being part of a textbook on East German art history with nine editions published between 1962 and 1987. Here, she proposed a reading of the protagonists based on the distinction between fighters and victims, indirectly reinforcing National Socialist prisoner hierarchies. She ignored the double badge on the forward prisoner's leg and described him as a passive, defenceless Jew who – unlike the invincible political fighter at the back – forfeited the right to live (Grundig 1964, 25):

> In this figure [the prisoner in the back], the artist expressed the ethics of fighting for human dignity and for the biggest cause, the liberation of mankind, Communism. The ideals of the working class are not destroyable, stronger than death. But even in death the weak [the prisoner in the front] is still bent, defiled and insulted. Still he wants to hide his dead face, always escaping, hunted to the last. He died without putting up a fight, he forfeited the right to live, the right to fight for his life.

In Palestinian exile Grundig herself had created a series on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising which she promoted in a brochure published by the East German National Ministry of Defence in 1959 (Grundig 1959, 8). Therein, she spoke highly of the Jewish resistance movement, but a few years later she reproduced the stereotype of the 'passive Jew' established in the 1950s (Hartewig 2001, 41).

It is possible that her developing career as a member of the ruling SED, the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, influenced her writings, or that an East German textbook required a certain set of ideas on the resistance and Communist superiority. Whatever the case, Grundig's anti-Jewish narrative continued to be repeated by several authors until 1978 (Dreißiger 1978, 59-60; Lammel 1974; anon 1971).

After the GDR gained international recognition in the early 1970s, the official memorial discourse began to transform. While the heroism of antifascist fighters was not to be doubted, the Shoah started to be acknowledged, so that even Lea Grundig softened her tone. In her posthumously published book on Hans Grundig she almost revised her anti-Jewish interpretation (Grundig 1978, 96):

> In the second version, the statement on the death camps is becoming more complete. Not everybody has been a fighting antifascist. In concentration camps the racially persecuted died as well: gypsies, Jews and the so called 'asocial', thousands and thousands.

Even if she maintained the distinction between fighter and victim, Lea Grundig was ahead of the times by openly referring to 'gypsies' and 'asocial' victims.

Having said that, it was not until 1988 – one year before the GDR collapsed – when Sander dared to criticize Lea Grundig's school-book text. For the first time he pointed out that Hans Grundig had painted a double badge and the number he had to wear in Sachsenhausen not only to show solidarity with Jewish victims but also – most tragically – to stand up for his own wife (Sander 1988, 17, 22).

Dis-continuities

In connection with debates on artists from the GDR and their political affiliations art historians focused mainly on Grundig's involvement with the SED after 1990. To point out Grundig's sceptical attitude towards party politics, art historian Eckhart Gillen brought to view the subversiveness of depicting a double badge in 2001, as it did not solely commemorate 'political prisoners' according to the SED's practices but also the Jewish victims of persecution (Gillen, 2001). To strengthen his point, Gillen traced the biography of Helen Ernst, Grundig's friend mentioned in the second painting. After her liberation from Ravensbrück concentration camp, Ernst was accused by fellow inmates of collaborating with the SS. She was put on trial by the SED and rehabilitated only when Grundig intervened. Shortly afterwards, she died. If the artist included her in his painting, Gillen seemed to argue, he implicitly criticized the SED and its treatment of survivors. Thus Grundig could not be criticized for his unlimited support of the SED regime, as had happened to several East German artists after the unification of both Germanies.

Despite criticizing the GDR as a dictatorship, art historians who wrote about the *Victims* paintings after 1990 generally continued to use the terminology established in the GDR, especially the terms 'memorial', 'cenotaph', 'tribute' or 'reminder' (Gillen 2001; Hoffmann-Curtius 2014, 119; Schröter 2010, 474; Weber 2001, 74). Whereas authors from the GDR tended to avoid the topic of con-

crete persecution and chose to repeat empty phrases, Ingeborg Kähler and Eck-
hart Gillen employed the topos of the 'Unspeakable' when referring to the *Vic-
tims* paintings (Gillen 2009, 61; Kähler 1995, 86). As both authors did not im-
merse themselves in the discussion on the 'Unspeakable', they employed a com-
mon strategy which replaced early post-war denial with the 'Unspeakable'. The
strategy exploits the discussion on the (im)possibilities of representing the
Shoah not to speak about persecution at all. Gillen stated that Grundig would
have known that 'Auschwitz cannot be explained or made visible' (Gillen 2009,
61), ignoring Grundig's outspoken wish to find an adequate form of representa-
tion, a wish in complete contradiction to the aforementioned 'Unspeakable' (see
Grundig 1947, 122). Instead of referring to Grundig's experiences as a Sachsen-
hausen concentration camp prisoner, Gillen employed the topos of Auschwitz,
replacing biographical facts by a standing term.

Conclusion

Over the decades, the critics of *Night over Germany* have focused on German
guilt, while the writings on Grundig's *Victims* paintings mainly revolved around
antifascist heroism. Most shockingly, in both cases the factual subject matter,
the depiction of the victims of persecution, has been secondary. *Night over Ger-
many* has been called a 'Golgotha', an image of salvation. The prisoners and the
people in hiding have been ignored, described as innocent Germans or consid-
ered to be guilty; the prison inmates in the predella and the tattooed children in
the central panel have been described as resistance fighters, and the Jewish fam-
ily in the right panel has mostly been ignored.

Similarly, Grundig's protagonists have either been labeled as heroic antifas-
cist fighters or as an antifascist fighter and a 'passive Jew'. While Grundig's
paintings have been celebrated as memorials, little interest has been shown for
the artist's own suffering as a concentration camp prisoner, for the friends he
commemorated or the general history of National Socialist persecution.

Critics reinvented the artworks according to their fictitious accounts of the
past and used them as vehicles to promote their own agendas, to deny all per-
sonal and public involvement in National Socialism, to present the GDR as *the*
antifascist state or to promote the success of German 'self-reflection'. Apart
from one writer who admitted to personal guilt in 1947, the early post-war re-
ception of *Night over Germany* has been dominated by denial or appropriation.

Interestingly, the use of religious terminology to describe National Socialist
persecution can be traced throughout the decades and in the reception of all three
artworks. It seems to be part of a general tendency of avoidance that started with
post-war denial and ended with vague references to the 'Unspeakable' in the
1990s and 2000s. Not only have most writers ignored concrete responsibility
and involvement, they have avoided facts about persecution altogether. It was

more than twenty years before an art historian would mention details from Grundig's imprisonment, and another twenty until historical documents were presented. It was fifty years before a Strempel expert discussed the problem of German self-pity, and another ten before the fact that Germans generally knew about the existence of National Socialist crimes long before the end of World War II was acknowledged, in the context of these paintings, in print.

Terminological, psychological and conceptual continuities can be found in the reception of all three artworks even after the change of political systems. They show not only a tendency to avoid conflicting views within the art critical community, but also the durability of a certain approach towards history, even in the face of paintings that confront their viewers directly with the existence of National Socialist crimes. The examination of the reception of all three artworks proves the highly acclaimed German 'self-reflection' to be nothing but wishful thinking. A new examination of these artworks is needed, one that dares to challenge established narratives and put the factual subject matter first.

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1   Unless otherwise noted all translations are by the author.

Curating the past:
Margins and materiality in Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan's *The Wild Irish Girl*

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Abstract: In nineteenth-century historical fiction, the emphasis on antiquities was often expressed through capacious footnotes and endnotes as a way to personalise the past. I offer the novel by Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan, The Wild Irish Girl *(1806) as a case study of this textual phenomenon, reading the ways that Owenson attempts to connect the past with the present upon the page: to contain and represent cultural history. Excavating Owenson's footnotes and their antiquarian curation of her historical fiction allows us to identify and interrogate her larger project of weaving history through fiction by means of antiquarian commentary. Thus, I argue that through the paratextual glosses that have come to characterise the nineteenth-century historical novel, historical fiction holds the potential to become an archive that reshapes (and romances) collected ideological artefacts into a new textual, literary record. Footnotes in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century historical fictions present, document and organise information in order to foster new perspectives and build new ways of imagining the past.*

History is often told through collections and the act of collecting. Sir Walter Scott's 1816 novel *The Antiquary* illustrates this approach to historiography, in its presentation of the eponymous antiquary, Jonathan Oldbuck. Oldbuck is fixated on historical artefacts as a way of pursuing knowledge and coming to terms with the past. The materiality of the book, the physical object of *The Antiquary* itself, is likewise fixated on antiquities and antiquarianism, which are represented through the novel's editorial apparatus of extensive annotations: the many footnotes and endnotes offering scholarly commentary on the people, places, events and objects collected within the narrative. Ten years prior to Scott's critically acclaimed novel of antiquities and historicity, Sydney Owenson (later Lady Morgan, 1776-1859) published *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806), a work that is perhaps the supreme example of the extensive citation of antiquarian works in a historical novel, a practice carried on into the nineteenth century more selectively by Scott as well as fellow Irish novelist Maria Edgeworth. This

valuation of artefacts as a way of bringing 'the antiquary into a closer contact with those who had inhabited the past' (Sweet 2004, 28) anticipates later attitudes to historical fiction and to the act of collecting, such as Walter Benjamin's remarks on the collector's relationship with artefacts. Benjamin writes that the collector 'does not emphasize [artefacts'] functional, utilitarian value – that is, their usefulness – but studies and loves them as the scene, the stage, of their fate' (Benjamin 1968, 60).

Upon turning the pages of *The Wild Irish Girl* the reader cannot help but notice the lengthy footnotes running over most pages of the novel, footnotes that present editorial commentary, complementing the fictional storyline. In all its contemporary printings, the novel is divided horizontally into two sections: the fictional, romance narrative fills the upper, main portion of the page; the footnotes below provide scholarly discourse that sometimes overtakes the boundaries of the lower margin and fills the page. In fact, one single footnote consists of nearly 2,000 words and fills over ten full pages in the text's original octavo format. Such paratextuality is not uncommon in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century historical novels, as the works of Horace Walpole, Charlotte Smith, Jane Porter and many others attest. The seeming ubiquity of marginal annotations in the genre has prompted critics like Susan Stewart to ask, 'How does the present appropriate the past? How does our gaze upon the past, even when articulated as a desire to escape mediation, always separate us from the past?' (Stewart 1991, 68). I use these questions as a foundation for reading the marginal annotations of *The Wild Irish Girl* as a case study in the ability of fiction to appropriate and curate narratives of the past, to contain, define and redefine cultural history. I read *The Wild Irish Girl* as a dialectic between past and present, centre and margin. Owenson, acting as both author and editor of the text, shapes her novel into a rich collection of Irish cultural artefacts set on display in the narrative and curated in the footnotes. These curatorial footnotes provide Owenson's editorial voice with a platform to oversee the text and to prescribe an interpretation of the narrative: she is able to act as a superintendent or curator of the text, editing the fictional letters that comprise the narrative. The novel's footnotes provide contextual information for the linguistically mediated antiquities 'collected' in the text. Together, the text and paratexts provide a tale that promotes a more complex panorama of the past than either the romance narrative or the notes could portray on their own.

The plot of *The Wild Irish Girl* weaves together generic elements of saccharine romances, epistolary novels, travel narratives, political allegories, antiquarian accounts and history primers. The effect is a novelised dissertation that argues for a reconsideration of the cultural and historical merit of Ireland. The main text consists primarily of Horatio's letters to a correspondent, J D, and an introductory series of letters between Horatio and his father, along with a brief third-person, non-epistolary conclusion. Horatio's letters document his travels

through the Irish countryside with anecdotes of 'the Irish character in all its primeval ferocity' (Owenson 1806, 17).[1] The novel opens with Horatio's banishment from England to his father's estate 'on the north-west coast of Connaught … the classic ground of Ireland' (Owenson 1806, 17). Horatio provides a detailed account of his arrival in Ireland and journey to Inismore, providing an ethnographic account of 'the tone of national character and manner' (Owenson 1806, 16). Upon arriving at his father's Irish estate, Horatio hears of O'Melville, romanticised as the last Prince of Inismore, and his daughter Glorvina, described as being 'like nothing upon the face of God's creation but herself' (Owenson 1806, 40). These living relics of Irish antiquity reside in the ruinous Castle of Inismore situated on land expropriated by Horatio's family. After one glance at Glorvina, Horatio instantly becomes smitten, and climbs a perilous pinnacle to catch just one more glimpse of her. He falls from the rock and is taken in by the Prince and Glorvina to recover. Horatio is convinced that the Prince and Glorvina would despise him if they knew his identity: he is a descendant of the English landlord class and fears that he would suffer the 'cold aversion of irreclaimable prejudice' if they were to discover his family's role in alienating their hereditary property (Owenson 1806, 53). To forestall this 'cold aversion', he calls himself Henry Mortimer and masquerades as a traveling landscape painter, promising to instruct Glorvina in the art during his convalescence. Horatio's letters soon turn from providing an ethnographic overview to recounting conversations he holds with Glorvina, and he includes summaries of their conversations about poetry, music, fashion, political history and religious history. Over the course of Horatio's residence in the Castle of Inismore, he falls even more passionately in love with Glorvina, but soon learns that she is intended to marry another man (whom readers will later learn is Horatio's father). Incensed, Horatio leaves the Castle and returns to the lodge on his father's estate where he receives a letter announcing that his father will soon be arriving in Dublin along with the father of a woman whom he has arranged will marry Horatio. None of the arranged marriages take place, however, as the sudden *deus ex machina* voice in the conclusion reveals. Instead, Horatio and Glorvina are allowed to marry, successfully resolving a marriage plot that has been the focus of many critical conversations about this novel (see Tracy 1985; Lew1990; Corbett 1998; Tracy 2004; Dougherty).

While the main narrative would not normally be labelled 'historical fiction' in the common sense, Owenson's novel can arguably be regarded a precursor or an early specimen of the genre if we consider the novel's 125 intricate editorial footnotes, which are preoccupied with Irish cultural and national history, as part of her novel. Readers are guided through Horatio's romantic encounter with Ireland and its native inhabitants by these editorial footnotes, one of which is a footnote subjoined to another footnote and includes a citation to an explanation given in a previous footnote. Eighty include direct citations of outside sources;

other notes consist of vocabulary glosses and translations, anecdotes and commentary without identification of specific sources. Similar to the way that Horatio describes Glorvina's storytelling within the narrative, the novel's curator, Owenson, who acts as author and poses also as an editor, likewise punctuates her narrative with a 'thousand delicious comments' that contain, critique and ultimately curate the artefacts that they frame (Owenson 1806, 155).

One way to explain this curation of the past is to read footnotes like these as a textual manifestation of an emphasis on objectivity and classification that emerged from the Enlightenment. Jonathan Kramnick has explained simultaneous romanticising and classification as a merger of the Gothic charm of Britain's past and its obscured continuity with Britain's present. Likewise, Clifford Siskin and William Warner describe this emphasis on particularities of the past as a 'turn toward more specialized and localized knowledges and practices' occurring in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Kramnick 1997, 1087; Siskin and Warner 2010, 26). I read the prolific application of annotation in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century imaginative literatures, particularly in the historical novel, as a manifestation of this turn. I suggest that we interpret the antiquities collected and set on display in *The Wild Irish Girl* as indicative of Owenson's engagement with contemporary historiographical philosophies. Owenson expands antiquarian discourse, a discourse previously confined to works of Irish historians and antiquaries in the 1760s through 1780s, to the realm of novels and fiction (see O'Halloran 2005, 6; Peacocke 2013). Thus, I argue here for reading the antiquarian-inspired historical and national romance *The Wild Irish Girl* as itself an antiquarian catalogue, a systematic record or a cultural genealogy connecting the present with the past.

Antiquarianism and annotations

The creation of meaning within *The Wild Irish Girl* relies largely upon the efforts of the reader to unite the disparate text and paratexts that give a unique shape and texture to the page. Joe Bray, Miriam Handley, and Anne C Henry suggest that 'to mark a text is also to make it […;] features such as punctuation, footnotes, epigraphs, white space and marginalia, marks that traditionally have been ignored in literary criticism, can be examined for their contribution to a text's meaning' (Bray et al 2000, xvii). Therefore, to give primacy to the margins of the novel and the paratexts that mark the page is to unearth the meaning offered by the text-plus-paratext. In unearthing this meaning, the reader must also distinguish between Owenson's editorial voice, her authorial presence and her creation of character. Owenson juxtaposes her own critical voice with the narrative voice of her fictional Horatio to underscore her argument for Ireland's cultural prowess. She draws upon a conventional model of critical, academic writing alongside the mode of fictional romance by her prolific use of footnotes. By looking to broader trends of historiography in the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries, especially as these appear within the framework of historical fiction and national romance, we can gain a better idea of how to interpret the multi-textual, layered narrative that Owenson weaves in *The Wild Irish Girl*. This interpretation, in turn, allows us to understand more fully the ways this book is not only a product of epistemological trends, but also a contribution to the varied landscape of antiquarian literary productions.

Popular and literary antiquarianism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be broadly defined by its focus on the local and the particular to create a tangible narrative of the past. Distinct from the abstract philosophies of lofty and learned historians, antiquarians focus on the concrete, material aspects of social and cultural history (Woolf 2000, 3-12; Sweet 2004, 5). The antiquarian moves past the macro-level historiography of geological, geographical and political narratives to a micro-level history: the particular places and people associated with the artefacts collected which held an 'evocative power to conjure up images of bygone eras. The tangible physicality of the object offered a sensory point of contact with the past, which no amount of descriptive eloquence could replicate' (Sweet 2004, 27). This localisation makes history something specific and tangible, 'a physical contact with the past, transcending the passage of time' (Sweet 2004, 33). This specificity is often represented in marginal annotations in antiquarian historiographies, the nineteenth-century historical novel and the historical fictions ushering in the genre, like *The Wild Irish Girl*.

As textual indications of antiquarianism, footnotes in historical fiction represent an undeniable expression of desire for historicity and locality, contextualising and romanticising the artefacts (Mayer 1999; Saglia 1999). These paratexts thoroughly problematise the ways we commonly perceive the role and voice of the author. With paratexts, the role of the author becomes inextricable from those of editor and reader as well. Paratexts gain this multiplicity through what Gérard Genette regards as their 'discursive nature', echoing Mikhail Bakhtin's concepts of hybrid discourse; that is, the interplay between the author and text, text and reader, author and reader and the compositional process enacted in this discourse (Genette 1997, 332; Bakhtin 1981). Shari Benstock suggests that 'the footnote in fiction operates in much the same way as it does in criticism: to call attention to the presence of author and reader on textual grounds' (Benstock 1983, 206). Likewise, Lawrence Lipking states that the existence – even simply the possibility – of glosses and footnotes 'demonstrates that the space surrounding print is not a vacuum but a plenum' (Lipking 1977, 613). This plenum is made evident in the ways that notes 'call out' and '[render] more exact' the meaning of the literary text, as David Simpson writes of annotated poetry, 'while at the same time the main text is implicitly found wanting, in need of further explication. Something more needs to be said, but it appears in small print, as if not fully belonging […] and yet somehow pertinent' (Simpson 2012, 109). That is, the paratexts provide context, exacting the meaning of an imperfect text; in their material manifestation, these contextualising frames are both

part of and apart from the main text, relegated to the margins and often set in fine print. The result of this location in and dislocation from the text, as both Genette and Simpson have observed, is a liminal space; and it is in this liminality (the margins, which are included in the novel yet not wholly part of it) where Owenson's account of Ireland, as a part of Britain yet not wholly included, is told most clearly.

Several critics of *The Wild Irish Girl* nod to the annotations and acknowledge their significance within the novel's underlying plot of social and political criticism (Tessone 2002, 169, 175; Jylkka 2011, 84-5; Connolly 2000, lvii). Susan B. Egenolf describes these notes as an ekphrastic gloss that ultimately commands the romance narrative: 'Horatio's naïve first-person narrative is enveloped by the learned glosses of the editor' (Egenolf 2009, 106). These glosses, according to Jane Stevenson, provide a 'heady and intricate blend of the historical and the fantastic' (Stevenson 1995, 196). They are, as Joep Leerssen heralds them, 'part of [the book's] maverick charm' and 'a textual shadow zone' that shifts the interest of the text to an 'interest in Ireland itself rather than in the girl who metonymically personifies it' (Leerssen 1989, 102). Ina Ferris, in turn, reads Owenson's annotations as the means through which the fictitious editor of the letters can authenticate the culture and history of Ireland, while others have examined the ideological and material connections of marginality (page and nation) and read Owenson's footnotes as a site of marginalised expression and as a representation of invasion and union, both textually and politically, humanising her scholarship (Ferris 1991, 126; Ferris 1996, 291; see also Watson 2012, 8, 49-50; Douglass 2011; and Zerby 2002, 9). In concert with these critics, I read Owenson's national romance and notes together as 'simultaneous narratives', as Egenolf describes them; these narratives are not about Ireland itself, as Leerssen suggests, but 'about other texts about Ireland' (Egenolf 2009, 106; Leerssen 1996, 60). Building from these assessments of Owenson's annotations, I read the notes themselves to consider their contribution both to the novel itself and to the wider genre of historical fiction. I suggest that Owenson's footnotes achieve an antiquarian-like curation of the myriad artefacts – material and immaterial – set on display within the narrative of romance and history. The marks of antiquarian history that these notes impart on the novel hold singular importance for the ways we read and interpret *The Wild Irish Girl* as well as how we might read the wider genre of historical fiction emerging in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Owenson presents readers with a rich collection of Irish antiquities set on display in the narrative and curated in the notes. In her presentation of this collection, she draws upon the techniques of description of those antiquarian treatises from which she referenced in composing her footnotes, including Sylvester O'Halloran's *An Introduction to the Study of the History and Antiquities of Ireland* (1772), volume four of Charles Vallancey's six-volume *Collectanea de*

rebus Hibernicis (1770-1804; Vol. 4 1784), and Joseph Cooper Walker's *Historical Memoirs of the Irish Bards* (1786). Together, the linguistically mediated artefacts provide a glimpse into the culture of collection and of Irish antiquities. However, unlike these object-oriented antiquarian histories, Owenson's novel is organised to tell a story. The diachronic narrative and the synchronic paratexts in *The Wild Irish Girl* unite to suggest a contextual or thematic relationship among artefacts on display.

For example, Owenson removes the Irish harp of tenth-century Irish chieftain, Brien Boirohm, from its display in Trinity College Dublin where it was placed in 1782 and places it in the hands of Glorvina. When Glorvina tells Horatio about the musical history of Ireland, Horatio asks if her harp follows the original design of ancient Irish harps. Glorvina replies,

> 'Not exactly, for I have strung it with gut instead of wire, merely for the gratification of my own ear;* but it is, however, precisely the same form as that preserved in the Irish university, which belonged to one of the most celebrated of our heroes, Brian Boru; for the warrior and the bard often united in the character of our kings.' (Owenson 1806, 68)

The asterisk in the middle of this passage draws the reader's attention to the page margins where Owenson, as textual curator, provides a verbal description of the Irish harp she sets on display within the novel's narrative. In the note, Owenson draws upon the authority of 'a very eminent modern Irish bard, Mr O'Neil' who describes the Irish harp in greater detail: '"My harp has thirty-six strings" (the harp of *Brian Boiromh* had but 28 strings), "of four kinds of wire, increasing in strength from treble to bass; your method of turning yours (by octaves and fifths) is perfectly correct; but a change of keys or half tones, can only be effected by the tuning hammer"' (Owenson 1806, 68n, emphasis in the original). This description within the footnote focuses only on the Irish harp and its utility; Owenson, in the narrative, both describes the harp and places it into the context of human use. Thus, in drawing attention to the localised particularities, and, especially in *The Wild Irish Girl*, the material artefacts, Owenson places precedence on personalising national and cultural history.[2]

One crucial site of collecting activity within the novel is Horatio's documentation of the fictional Castle of Inismore, which Horatio even describes as an 'armory, a museum, a cabinet of national antiquities, and national curiosities' (Owenson 1806, 98). This '*emporium* of the antiquities of Inismore' has fallen into romantic ruin, 'grand even in desolation, and magnificent in decay' (Owenson 1806, 100, emphasis in the original). He records the 'dilapidated architecture' through his paintings and drawings, thereby exhibiting his own collection of Irish cultural landscapes (Owenson 1806, 45). Here we can see how Horatio himself has modelled his engagement with Ireland as that of a Benjaminian collector, archivist and, most notably, an antiquarian draftsman. At this point in the novel, Horatio's account of the objects (along with Owenson's scattered

footnotes) truly does read more like a descriptive catalogue of the collected martial relics and the various architectural details of the Castle ruins than a romance.
Horatio describes the Castle's architecture as follows:

> Almost every evening after vespers, we all assemble in a spacious hall,*
> which had been shut up for near a century, and first opened by the pre
> sent prince when he was driven for shelter to his paternal ruins…[the hall]
> runs the full length of the castle as it now stands (for the centre of the
> building only, has escaped the dilapidations of time), and its beautifully
> arched roof is enriched with numerous devices, which mark the spirit of
> that day in which it was erected. This very curious roof is supported by
> two rows of pillars of that elegant spiral lightness which characterizes the
> Gothic order in a certain stage of its progress. The floor is a finely tessel
> lated pavement; and the ample but ungrated hearths which terminate it
> at either extremity, blaze every evening with the cheering contributions
> of a neighboring bog. The windows, which are high, narrow, and arched,
> command on one side a noble view of the ocean, on the other they are
> boarded up. (Owenson 1806, 98-99)

In this passage, Owenson, via the voice of Horatio, draws careful attention to
the appearance of the hall, making note of the grandeur of the 'paternal ruins'
and the Gothic elements of a 'beautifully arched roof', 'rows of pillars', 'tessellated pavement', and 'high, narrow, and arched' windows. Owenson accompanies these spatial descriptions of the ruinous hall with a scholarly footnote which
references O'Halloran: '*"Amidst the ruins of Buan Ratha, near Limerick, is a
princely hall and spacious chambers; the fine stucco in many of which is yet
visible, though uninhabitable for near a century" – *O'Halloran's Introduction
to the Study of the Hist. and Antiq. of Ireland*, p. 8"' (Owenson 1806, 98n).
Through the instructive interruption of the footnote, Owenson prompts readers
to periodically pause during the tour of her Irish architecture exhibition. Additionally, when we take up the invitation to consult O'Halloran, it becomes evident how the structural details of this hall that catch Horatio's attention closely
mirror the details provided in the illustrations and descriptions of ancient Irish
architecture in O'Halloran's work.

This attention to and reverence for Irish history is rhetorically similar to the
projects of the Irish antiquaries that Owenson relies upon in curating her collection, in penning her novel. Through the voice of Horatio and through her editorial persona, Owenson underscores the political agenda of her work. Her views
echo those of her antiquarian model, Sylvester O'Halloran:

> So blindly and wilfully [*sic*] prejudiced have modern writers concerning
> Ireland been, that our very maritime cities, in which the lofty towers,
> strong walls, and elegant buildings, bespeak the power as well as taste of
> the antient Irish, are all attributed to the Danes—a savage, barbarous
> crew, whose interruptions like those of their successors the Saxons, were
> every where marked with blood, rapine, and desolation! We every where

read of countries laid waste, people as well as buildings destroyed by
these barbarians, but not a word of improvements, whilst the evidences
of foreign, as well as domestic antient writers, are clearly in our favour.
(Owenson 1806, 86-87)

As may be expected, the lexis in O'Halloran's passage is remarkably similar to
that of Owenson – the purposeful reversal of perspective, painting the English
as equally odious as they had painted the Irish – demonstrates their shared opin-
ions on the devaluation of Irish history. Like O'Halloran, Owenson does not shy
away from calling out the destructive effects of neglecting Irish culture and his-
tory and even begins to incorporate an urgency into her own commentary in her
footnotes. Moreover, in referencing O'Halloran in a footnote, Owenson invites
the reader to consider the case for political urgency implicit in the romance nar-
rative and explicit in the footnotes.

Reconstructing the historical narrative

For Owenson, footnotes are more than markers of historiography, in the tradi-
tion of Edward Gibbon (or of satire, in the poetic tradition of Alexander Pope).
Her footnotes, rather, literally underscore and historicise her fiction. The foot-
notes provide Owenson with a platform for reconstructing and disrupting the
historical narrative. The antiquarian documentation offers a rhetorical strategy
for calling attention to moments and artefacts, 'momentarily alter[ing] the nar-
rative' (Owenson 1806, 16n). Owenson engages in marginal annotation as a
means through which to express her doubts as well as her convictions, while
also providing objective documentation to support her narrative of Irish history.
She uses the tool of the footnote to take advantage of the opportunity to politi-
cise, with surprising sharpness, Ireland's colonial past. In this editorialising
commentary, Owenson attempts to redeem and revalue Irish cultural artefacts.
Anthony Grafton writes that 'the text persuades, the notes prove', yet in Ow-
enson's manipulation of the margins, the notes also problematise Anglo-centric
historiographies (Grafton 1999, 15).

To reconstruct these narratives, she references thirty specific authors and a
wide array of titles, ranging from antiquarian histories to treatises on Irish poli-
tics, to travel narratives, to bardic poetry. The result of this complex constella-
tion of information is a multi-layered work of fiction, scholarship and critical
analysis that reconstructs the narrative of Irish history. As may be expected
given her pro-Hibernian stance, Owenson's textual network is comprised
largely of Irish historians and poets, including, among others, *The Transactions
of the Royal Irish Academy* (1787), Charlotte Brooks's *Reliques of Irish Poetry*
(1789), Edmund Burke's *Reflection on the Revolution in France* (1790) and *Let-
ter on the Penal Laws against the Irish Catholics* (1782), Oliver Goldsmith's
'The Deserted Village' (1770), Charles Smith's *The Ancient and Present State
of the County of Kerry* (1774) and *The Ancient and Present State of the County*

and City of Cork (1790) and William Parnell's *An Enquiry into the Causes of Popular Discontents in Ireland* (1805). When read alongside the fictional narrative of the central text, Owenson's footnotes present a distinct trajectory; the narrative and the notes work to similar but distinct ends. They begin by succinctly glossing references to cultural practices or phrases of Anglo-Irish vernacular but sharply veer away from the primary narrative with lengthier, anecdotal and essayistic commentary. They mark the fiction with the textual trappings of more conventional historiography but disrupt the trance of the romance narrative by providing a site for blatant social commentary and critique of Anglo-centric historiographical practices.

The inter-textual footnotes seek to tell a rich story in concert with the fictional romance. The admiration for Ireland is omnipresent in the fictional narrative and the footnotes alike. Indeed, the critical commentary in the margins – critical in both a scholarly and an ideological sense – is even more overt in its argument against English prejudice towards Irish culture and history than the narrative of the main text. The trajectory of the footnotes' content moves from a focus on ethnography to history to literary anecdotes and finally to politics, each conveyed with an increasing urgency and with fewer but lengthier quotations. The footnotes steadily sever themselves from the main text and introduce a new layer to Owenson's argument, one less directly connected with the text, but one with the same aim of collecting relics of Irish history. Although Owenson lowers her editorial voice by framing her commentary as footnotes to the larger work, this voice conveys as much vigour as the main text itself. The subordination of the footnote to the main text allows for a subtle integration of Owenson's argument, disembodied from the speakers in the novel; meanwhile, these subordinate footnotes exact control over the reading experience, should the reader choose to engage in them.

The notes begin by providing an ethnographic description of northwest Ireland, verbally painting the Irish cultural landscape alongside Horatio's own drawings described in the fictional narrative. In addition to providing her own first-hand knowledge of Irish culture, Owenson draws upon travelogues and memoirs as her outside sources for many of her ethnographic annotations. On Irish hospitality, Owenson comments, '* "Every unprejudiced traveller who visits them (the Irish), will be as much pleased with their cheerfulness as obliged by their hospitality; and will find them a brave, polite, and liberal people". - Philosophical Survey through Ireland by Mr. Young' (Owenson 1806, 16n). On traditional dress, she writes '* This manner of wearing the coat, so general among the peasantry, is deemed by the natives of the county of Galway a remnant of the Spanish modes' (Owenson 1806, 23n). She further comments on traditional dress by calling attention to legwear: '* They are called "triathians". —Thus in a curious dissertation on an ancient marble statue, of a bag-piper, by Signor Canonico Orazio Maccari, of Corona, he notices, "Nudi sono i piedi ma

due rozze calighe pastorali cuoprone le gambe"' (Owenson 1806, 23n). (Owenson does not provide a gloss for the Italian phrase, but it roughly translates to being 'barefoot but wearing crude, pastoral leggings reaching to the calf of the leg'.) Owenson's ethnographical notes seek to challenge misconceptions of a savage, uncultivated Ireland by pointing to 'refined' Spanish fashion and showcasing her own erudition by appropriately quoting in Italian.

Next, the notes turn to a discussion of historiographic portrayals of Ireland, implicitly arguing for revaluing of Irish cultural history by disavowing pervasive stereotypes. Owenson provides ethnographic information drawn from historical and antiquarian sources to temper assumptions of intemperance among the Irish while introducing the notion of established rules of civility among the ancient Irish militia. She writes that '* The temperance of an Irish peasant in this respect is almost incredible … One of the rules observed by the Finian land, or ancient militia of Ireland, was to eat but once in the twenty-four hours. —See Keating's History of Ireland' (Owenson 1806, 24-25n). Owenson continually undermines commonplace prejudices against the Irish. Steadily becoming less detached from her scholarly narrative, she challenges readers to reconsider commonly held opinions of the Irish people and to accord Irish history the reverence it deserves:

> *It has been the fashion to throw an odium on the modern Irish, by undermining the basis of their ancient history, and vilifying their ancient national character. If an historian professes to have acquired his information from the records of the country, whose history he writes, his accounts are generally admitted as authentic, as the commentaries of Garcilorsso [*sic*] de Vega are considered as the chief pillars of Peruvian history, though avowed by their authorship to have been compiled from the old national ballads of the country; yet the old writers of Ireland, (the psalter of Cashel in particular) though they refer to those ancient records of their country, authenticated by existing manners and existing habits, are plunged into the oblivion of contemptuous neglect, or read, only to be discredited. (Owenson 1806, 169n)

Owenson argues that the biased histories that 'throw an odium on the modern Irish' must be reconsidered – Irish history is exceedingly complex and should be recognised as such. While arguing this, she simultaneously places Irish history into a larger world history of colonisation and cultural appropriation. The Spanish empire in South America at this time was regarded as a sort of symbol of bad colonising (greedy, brutal, Catholics, and so on) and used to illustrate the comparative civilisation of British imperialism (much as the Belgian Congo would be employed later in the century as an example of uncivilised colonisation) (Elliott 2006, xvii-xviii). Thus in comparing the colonised Irish to the Inca, Owenson is making quite a provocative statement. She points out the double standard that acknowledges oral traditional materials from other nations (such as from Peru) as credible but that discredits and even casts contempt upon Irish

oral tradition as historical source material. The passage she selects implies a desire to instill sympathy for the native Irish akin to that felt for the oppressed Incas. Owenson's marginal commentary invites historians and novel readers alike to put an end to this prejudiced practice.

Next, Owenson turns to traditional Irish oral materials in her footnotes as part of her historical project and critical argument, to rectify what she perceives as an injustice to Irish oral history. Here, she develops her efforts to validate Irish history and identity through poetical sources and literary anecdotes, in addition to the ethnographic sources. In these footnotes containing literary anecdotes, Owenson draws upon Thomas Percy, Charlotte Brooke, James Macpherson and Oliver Goldsmith along with a few lines of traditional ballads and references to ancient poems. For example, in a lengthy footnote regarding the history and high status of minstrelsy across Britain but particularly in Ireland, Owenson quotes the traditional ballad 'King Estmere' from Percy's *Reliques*:

> And you shall be a harper's brother,
> Out of the north countrye,
> And I'll be your boy so fine of sighte,
> And bear your harp by your knee.
> And thus they renesht them to ryde
> On two good Renish steedes,
> And when they came to King Adland's hall
> Of red gold shone their weedes. (Owenson 1806, 69n)

Along with this poetic interjection, Owenson turns to an English source for legitimating information regarding the status of the Irish culture of minstrelsy:

> Dr Percy justly observes, that in this ballad, the character of the old minstrels (those successors to the bards) is placed in a very respectable light; for that 'here we see one of them represented mounted on a fine horse, accompanied with an attendant to bear his harp, etc. etc.' And I believe in Ireland only, is the minstrel of remote antiquity justly represented in the itinerant bard of modern days. (Owenson 1806, 69n)

She deftly lends an Irish focus to the English source, pointing out the role and status of minstrelsy still maintained 'in Ireland only'. In highlighting the Irish continuation of a vocation previously practiced also in England but now defunct, Owenson highlights a continuity with the past that Ireland has been able to maintain, but which England has lost. Here, she voices what Joep Leerssen has referred to as the 'literary-political formula that Ireland is a country tragically caught between its past and present, its dreams and its realities' (Leerssen 1991, 284), and also what Katie Trumpener has noted as a nationalist desire for a future based on reparations of the past: 'a future in which a history of cultural achievements was at once honored, preserved, and rejoined' (Trumpener 1997,

30). Thus, by coupling antiquarianism's particularity and utility with an idealisation of the past, Owenson offers hope for an idyllic future Ireland through her vision of chronological unity wrapped up within the role of the minstrel.

Maintaining her focus on Irish literary history, Owenson incorporates the opinions of Irish poet Charlotte Brooke for further support of the poetic merit of Irish literature as a way to portray a coveted culture, quoting from Brooke's *Reliques of Irish Poetry*: '*…"Tis scarcely possible that any language can be more adapted to lyric poetry than the Irish; so great is the smoothness and harmony of its numbers: it is also possessed of a refined delicacy, a descriptive power, and an exquisite tender simplicity of expression"' (Owenson 1806, 42n). This return to poetic history and clear romanticising of poetic values and structures of the past is a demonstration of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's contemporary theory of language development, wherein he asserts during the 'golden age' or 'barbaric times' that 'at first only poetry was spoken' (Rousseau 1781, 33, 12). Through Brooke's assessment of poetic language, Owenson attempts to show the historical continuity that Ireland has maintained, unlike England's poetic history and progression.

Finally, Owenson's argument in the footnotes progresses into politics and social criticism. She provides a pointed critique of English prejudices against Irish culture and identity; she rallies against the unfair welfare policies enacted for Irish citizens and tenants of Anglo-Irish landholders. For this part of her argument, she draws heavily on Edmund Burke's political reflections and William Parnell's impassioned *Enquiry into the Causes of Popular Discontents in Ireland* (1805), which had been just published the previous year.

Not all of Owenson's footnotes follow the trajectory outlined here. In some notes espousing social criticism, she eschews documentation and uses the notes instead to present her own reasoned but passionate argument on politics, history, and literature alike. She relies upon her pathos alone without any secondary sources in stating her case for the 'once oppressed, but ever unsubdued spirit' of the Irish population (Owenson 1806, 172n). The most poignant portion of Owenson's argument and engagement of herself as the scholarly authority on Irish politics appears in Letter XXV in a very lengthy footnote. Over the course of this 750-word footnote, Owenson first states her goal of 'effac[ing] from the Irish character the odium of cruelty; by which the venom of prejudiced aversion has polluted its surface' (Owenson 1806, 171n). She then critiques British colonialism, comparing British invasions and accompanying histories to Spanish colonisation of the Americas and their histories:

> Had the Historiographer of Montezuma or Altaliba defended the resistance of his countrymen, or recorded the woes from whence it sprang, though his quipas was bathed in their blood, or embued [*sic*] with their

> tears, he would have unavailingly recorded them; for the victorious Span-
> iard was insensible to the woes he had created, and called the resistance
> it gave birth to cruelty. (Owenson 1806, 171n)

The footnote continues in this feverish and passionate tone, juxtaposing Spanish and British colonialism in a most poignant – even damning – comparison. For, as John Huxtable Elliott states, 'if Spain in the sixteenth century had furnished the model [of colonialism] to be followed, now […] it was the model to be shunned' (Elliott 2006, 220-21). Owenson likewise shuns the British model of 'commercial enterprise, Protestantism and liberty' which was 'enshrined as the mutually reinforcing constituents of a national ethos' (Elliott 2006, 220-21) in British colonisation efforts in Ireland and across the globe. Here, Owenson appears to abandon her scholarly persona and to speak instead as an impassioned Irish patriot. No longer do the notes merely 'enable the reader to work backward from the established argument to the texts it rests on', as print historian Anthony Grafton suggests (Grafton 1999, 30). Rather, the footnotes of personal reflection and cultural commentary provide a paratextual platform for criticism that is related to the text in theme, but not in content. The various marginal critiques, such as this one, provide us with moments of pause where the narrative's spell is broken and where we are able to more thoroughly reflect upon the offered information and opinion rather than be swept up entirely into Horatio's and Glorvina's blossoming romance.

In this lengthy note, Owenson presents a history of British affiliations with Ireland prior to the 1800 Act of Union which promised to restore equality: 'here may be found a remnant of an ancient British Colony, more pure and unmixed, than in any other part of the world. And here were committed those barbarities, which have recently attached the epithet of cruel to the name of Irishman!' (Owenson 1806, 172n). She calls the reader's attention to 'ancient Irish independence' with a record entirely clean of bloodshed (without documentation) (Owenson 1806 172n). Here, her argument becomes increasingly impassioned as she reflects upon the injustice she sees enacted upon her native land and the people therein. This note, one of several with a similar argumentative tone, refuses to submit to Benstock's assessment of footnotes in fiction as belonging 'to a fictional universe' and stemming 'from a creative act rather than a critical one, and direct themselves toward the fiction and never toward an external construct, even when they cite "real" works in the world outside particular fiction' (Benstock 1983, 205). Rather, in her curatorial role as mock-editor, Owenson has taken the reader on a journey from traditional, antiquarian footnoting to a political paratext of critical commentary in the course of the novel. This final annotation stands as the apex of the journey with its partisan Burke-esque essay style with a markedly different rhetoric from her earlier antiquarian descriptions.

Owenson's argument in the annotations becomes most developed in this footnote. It is not a note where she mentions herself or 'the author'. It is not a note where she provides woolly quotations, citations of secondary sources, or visual descriptions of dress, artefacts or events. Instead, it is a note where Owenson lets her voice speak loudly for itself and command a generous portion of the page, spanning over five pages in the original octavo format. The curatorial voice of the paratext is entirely divorced from the narrative voice of the text. The note offers a strategic emotional appeal – presumably reflecting Owenson's personal stance – and emphasises what Benstock describes as 'the interplay between author and subject, text and reader, that is always at work in fiction, giving us occasion to speculate on self-reflective narration as an aspect of textual authority' (Benstock 1983, 205). This fiery footnote is one of the final annotations Owenson provides in the novel. Thus, we may even read this lengthy footnote dedicated to debunking the myth of Irish depravity as the crux of Owenson's argument for Irish equality, presented in the trappings of antiquarian historiography.

Conclusion

In a letter written to Owenson while she was composing *The Wild Irish Girl*, Irish historian and antiquarian Joseph Cooper Walker offered his assistance regarding matters of Irish antiquities and folklore. He recommended that she 'collect some of [the Finian tales], and, perhaps, interweave them with the work on which you are at present employed. If you could obtain faithful descriptions of some of the scenes of those tales, you would heighten the interest of your romance by occasionally introducing them'. Walker further suggested that Owenson imitate 'the prose romance of the Irish, which was, I believe, generally interspersed with poetical pieces'. He then suggests that she review Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) for some examples, and to secure an audience with the 109-year-old 'Bard of the Maygelligans' to gather 'many anecdotes of the Bards of the North during the last century' (Walker 1863, 261-63). It is evident that Walker's unsolicited advice exercised considerable influence over the textual form of *The Wild Irish Girl*. Not only does Owenson cite passages of poetry from Percy's *Reliques* and provide the recommended account of the Bard of the Magilligans; she also takes to heart Walker's stylistic suggestion of drawing upon 'the prose romance of the Irish', densely interspersing her own modern romance with the 'faithful descriptions of some of those scenes' and the 'poetical pieces' Walker calls for; she also sets her narrative in the same northwest region of Ireland where many of the Finian Tales are set. Owenson also moves beyond imitating the style of established narrative forms and integrates the novel's defining feature – the footnotes.

Excavating Owenson's footnotes and their antiquarian curation of her historically inflected fiction allows us to identify and interrogate her larger project

of reclaiming and celebrating Irish primitivism as a means of establishing a sympathetic unity of Ireland's textual fragments and cultural ruins. Accordingly, the logic of the antiquarian's or collectors' elevation of fragments and ruins to treasures provides a useful framework through which to read the relics entextualised and curated in Owenson's footnotes. Thus, through the marginal annotation that has come to characterise both Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* and its generic cousin, the nineteenth-century historical novel, historical fiction holds the potential to become an archive that reshapes (and romances) collected artefacts into a new textual, literary record. The footnotes that mark the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century generic precursors to the historical novel present, document, and organise information in order to foster new perspectives and build new ways of imagining the past.

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1   All subsequent citations of the novel and its notes are drawn from this edition and are included parenthetically in the text.

2   Owenson's attention to history as personal, lived experience is indicative of early nineteenth-century philosophies of the past. Writing contemporaneously with Owenson, William Godwin notes the distinction between political and personal – national and local, abstract and particular – histories in his posthumously published essay 'Of History and Romance':

> The study of history divides itself into two principal branches; the study of mankind in a mass, of the progress, the fluctuations, the interests and the vices of society; and the study of the individual. The history of a nation might be written in the first of the senses, entirely in terms of abstraction, and without descending so much as to name one of those individuals of which the nation is composed. (Godwin 1794, 359)

Thus, despite the easy dismissal of the antiquarian as eccentric, this form of history emphasised the distinction Georg Lukács later drew between the Great and the Common Man: 'what matters therefore in the historical novel is not the re-telling of great historical events, but the poetic awakening of the people who figured in these events' (Lukács 1937, 42).

Contentious history in 'Egyptian' television: The case of *Malek Farouq*

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Abstract: *This article asks what happens when the construction of national identity escapes national boundaries. Using an example from an Egyptian-Arabic televisual production,* Malek Farouq, *a biopic soap opera that narrates the life of the much reviled last king of Egypt, this article argues that changes in the production, distribution and consumption of media in the Arabic-speaking Middle East are contributing to a restructuring of various forms of cultural identity. The move from a nationally-centred regime of broadcasting, with its official regimes of truth, to a regional and transnational flow of television in multiple languages from multiple subjectivities is transforming ideas of communal identity. The principal argument of this article is that economic and technological changes in Arabic media production are inseparable from and have led to and stemmed from significant political and social transformations in contemporary Arab life.*

In the second episode of the Arabic language serial *Malek Farouq* (Ali, 2007) the title character, Prince Farouq of Egypt, cries himself to sleep. The sobbing ten-year old finds himself trapped and friendless within the lavishly appointed confines of his 1930s palace bedroom, after his father, the authoritarian King Fuad, becomes enraged with him for consorting with the commoners of the palace staff. As the screen fades to black, it is the first time since 1952 in Egyptian-oriented popular media that the historical Farouq (1920-1965) has been depicted in anything other than a profoundly negative light.

This article seeks to relate the serial, a material claim on 'true' Egyptian history with its attendant articulations of national and political identity, to the ontological historical transformations in the Egyptian nation, particularly in the area of broadcasting. In this sympathetic portrayal of the most reviled Egyptian leader in the twentieth century, we see a wildly popular televisual articulation of the Egyptian nation that was created outside the ideologically contained boundaries of Egyptian national broadcasting, and explicitly focuses on the political antithesis of the then current military and political regime. What I hope to show here is that contemporary global communications evaporate the easy

linkages between nation state and national identity. As national narratives slip out of the once-sure hands of national states, long-deflected questions of political, national and cultural identity re-enter the cultural sphere. But just as *Malek Farouq,* in its production and narrative, is an indeterminate blend of nationalist, modernist, post-modernist and globalist ideas, so too is there no guarantee of fixed social meaning in the new regime of contemporary Arab broadcasting. With over four hundred satellite channels aimed at Arabs from multiple national and global production companies, with the rise of social media and information distribution over the internet and telephony, with the cacophony of nationalist, Islamist and 'foreign' claims to ontological reality, the only abiding feature of contemporary electronic communication in the Arab world is dissonance.

In order to draw out *Malek Farouq's* relevance to contemporary transformations and its subtle restatement of modern Egyptian history, we must highlight the political, economic and cultural structures within which it was able to make meaning. It is in the contemporary transformation of Egyptian and Arab politics, the regional and global media economy and the cultural codes that provide individuals with clues to shared meaning that this programme takes on resonance as an indication and material example of structural changes that are affecting the entire globe.

After describing the series, this article will use *Malek Farouq* to trace the important transformations in contemporary Arab social life with a particular focus on the relationship between Egyptian/Arab media structures and regional/global economics.

Malek Farouq, the series

Malek Farouq was produced in 2007 for broadcast during the Ramadan season, the prime timeframe for televisual serials, which in that year fell between September 13 and October 12. It starred the Syrian actor Tayyim Hassan in the lead role. It also featured the Egyptian A-list actors Salah Abdallah, Ezzat Abu Aouf, Nabil Al Khalfawi, and Wafaa Amer. The entire cast, including extras, ran into the hundreds. The 32-episode show was written by Dr Lamis Gaaber, a female Egyptian pediatrician and wife of the A-list Egyptian actor Yahia Fakhraani. It was directed by the successful Syrian television director Haatim Ali. The show is listed as a production of Al Sadaf Productions from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. It was also partially financed and distributed by the Middle East Broadcast Center, a Dubai-based satellite broadcaster led by chairman and CEO Sheikh Waleed Bin Ibrahim Al Brahim, himself a member of the Saudi royal family.

The images of the opening credits presage the story, offering chronological scenes from the series including Farouq as a boy and various dramatic and conflictual moments of his life as prince and king of Egypt. These opening credits emphasize the quality, and thus perhaps the authority of the show in multiple

ways: the lavish locations, lighting and costumes; the sweeping, martial music; the fame and skill of the actors; and the depth and breadth of the Egyptian history about to be offered.

The series entered a contentious discursive environment before it was broadcast due to the controversial nature of the historical figure it depicts, the source of its funding from Saudi Arabia as well as the participation of Syrians at the highest levels of production. In addition to the nationalist implications of Syrian participation in Egyptian cultural production, Syrian involvement may have caused anxiety in the Egyptian television market due to the perceived quality of Syrian-branded productions. Prior to the civil war, Syrian historical dramas, including those directed by Hatim Ali such as *Saladin* (Ali 2001) enjoyed regional success and were marked by high production values and quality scripts. As a result, Ali and other Syrian directors are perceived as having changed the standards of Arabic serials. For example, Wafaa Amer, one of the stars of *Malek Farouq,* contentiously told a newspaper that Egyptian productions had a lot to learn from Syrian productions in terms of attention to detail on the set, make-up and costumes (Amer 2007).

With an estimated budget of LE20 million Egyptian pounds (approximately $4 million) (*Farouk of Egypt*) *Malek Farouq* had markedly high production values in comparison to many low-budget Egyptian serials which are often filmed with budgets of under $500k. In terms of acting, sound design, lighting, costumes, set design, location choices and music the show could be compared favorably with equivalent international productions.

These high production values were met with critical acclaim as the show went on to sweep the Cairo Arab Media Festival in 2007 in the category of Ramadan series. Farouq actor Tayyim Hassan won best actor, Lamis Gaaber won best screenplay, Haatim Ali won best director, Salah Abdallah won best supporting actor, Shirin won best emerging actress, Ahmed Ibrahim Ahmed won best lighting, and Tarik Nasser won for best music (Al Arabiyya 2007)

But the most surprising element of the series was its subject. In the iconography of post 1952 revolutionary Egyptian nationalism, the historical Farouq had become a symbol for the excesses of the previous political era. The image and name of Farouq came to stand for the corruption and self-interest of the old capitalist and colonialist order to oust which Gamal Abdel Nasser and the free officers initiated their 1952 revolution. Farouq was often portrayed as a corpulent glutton, an alcoholic, and a licentious pursuer of young women, and books were written on his life with titles such as *His Last Days: The Story of the King who Sold himself to Satan* (Sallam 1972) and *Farouq the First: The King Who Betrayed Everyone* (Thabit 1989).

In contrast, *Malek Farouq* was broadcast on the Middle East Broadcast Center (MBC) satellite channel for thirty-one consecutive days in 2007 during the

Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the high season of Arabic television broadcasting. It contextualized a nuanced character who, while flawed, seemed to have the best interests of his country at heart. In the episodes, his corpulence, long a consciously unflattering aspect of his depiction, was subtly attributed not to the debased gluttony of his 'true' character but to the anxieties of emotional bereavement and the intense pressures of national responsibility. The series depicted the trials and tribulations, the successes and failures of a figure caught in a political struggle between British colonial power-brokers, the nationalist politicians who controlled the Egyptian parliament and the newly-formed Muslim Brotherhood. The series psychologized a leader who loved and felt unloved, who struggled with his mother for affection and political power, and who cowered under the stern gaze of his father the king.

The series is most striking and controversial in its rendering of the national history of Egypt. In a didactic lesson intended to inform the viewers as much as the character of Farouq, the young prince is shown receiving a long Egyptian history lesson. The tutor goes through the history of Egyptian rulers since Muhammed Ali (1769-1849), the first of the contemporary royal dynasty. As the melodramatic music surges Farouq is told:

> Muhammed Ali created a modern Egypt. In his reign, Egypt benefited in everything. In production, agriculture, in business, army, navy, higher and primary education. But the problem is what happened to us forty years after his death with the occupation by the English. Definitely the country underwent a renaissance, but not the people. How? Because Muhammed Ali ruled the country with a closed kind of rule. Meaning he was the only one who took decisions and the people never were allowed to have an opinion. They were expected only to listen to his words. The result was that agriculture progressed very much, but the farmer himself was in the dirt. Production increased, but the workers were forced to work. They wanted to flee from the factories. It was a powerful rule, but the Egyptian people have never loved military rule. Education went forward, but the students and their parents were afraid because the soldiers would fall upon them and force them to go to the schools. Because of this, the English entered the country with ease. The army was weak, and their hold over the people was weaker. (Ali 2007) [1]

It is through multiple scenes like this that the nation is consciously articulated in this series. But what kind of nation is being articulated here? Not the nation contemporary to when the production was broadcast on Arab satellite television in 2007, nor the nation that Farouq himself would come to rule in the 1940s, nor the nation extant at the time of the didactic soliloquy, the 1930s. Instead, it is that ideal nation of hopeful nationalists, the kind that lives in the breast but has yet to materialize in history. In some ways this articulation of the nation could be seen to presage the kind of nation that Gamal Abdel Nasser would come to articulate with his 1952 'Arab Socialist revolution'. Nasser opened education to

the Egyptians, ideologically raised the social status of the farmers, and strengthened the army. However, Nasser also 'ruled the country with a closed kind of rule', and took his decisions in the people's name but without the explicit, democratic approval of the people.

This articulation of the nation, being produced outside the nation, is profoundly ambivalent. It can be read by traditional Egyptian nationalists, those educated and brought to consciousness in the wake of the Nasserist transformation of Egypt, as an anti-royalist statement. It could be read by those frustrated with contemporary Egyptian politics and nostalgic for the *ayam zamaan* (good old days) of the king as a representation of what the nation *could have been* without the intervention of 60 years of military rule. In short, this kind of articulation could offend no one and stands a good chance of pleasing most Egyptians.

Homi Bhabha describes this kind of nation when he says it is 'an idea whose cultural compulsion lies in the impossible unity of the nation as a symbolic force' (Bhabha 1990, 1). While on the surface the 'text' of *Malek Farouq* presents an inclusive unity of the nation, unifying precisely because it is just and fair to all its citizens, the ambivalence within *Malek Farouq* throws up another kind of nation. It contains discontinuities in which the elite speak in the name of the common people, in which the conflicts that threaten to tear the nation apart (as represented by the violent confrontations between the nationalists, the British and the Muslim Brotherhood) are never fully resolved, and in which the ontological history that lives outside the series proves to us that democracy lost.

Malek Farouq thus represents a significant articulation of the Egyptian nation, Egyptian national identity and Egyptian shared moral values, where the production of those ideas is happening in, around and outside of the nation state. In their enjoyment of a retelling of their 'own' national story, Egyptians discovered that Syrians, Saudis, and other Arabs, either through financial investment or direct participation in producing the series, were telling their story to them.

Arab media structures and economies: The unintended march towards globalization

The principal argument of this article is that economic and technological changes in Arabic media production are inseparable from and have led to and stemmed from significant political and social transformations in contemporary Arab life. We can see, in the shift from a singular, state-centred broadcasting regime of truth to a geographically diffused sphere of competing truths on transnational satellites, clues to the transformation of cultural and political subjectivity in the Arabic-speaking world. Benedict Anderson famously proposed that the nation is an imagined community (1991). If what distinguishes the nation, an object of affection or derision, from the state is a *narrative* arc, this widely-

valorized teleology explains, justifies and/or apologizes for the communal *now* in the face of the wild contingency of the random unfolding of time: the nation *is* history. To imagine the nation is to tell its story. To tell the story is to bring the nation into being. To dominate the story is to dominate the nation.

For the second half of the twentieth century, the Egyptian state presented itself as coterminous with the Egyptian nation. Through public education, religious education, through state-sponsored art, film and television and through control over the various mouth-pieces available to it, the Egyptian state *told* the history of the nation, and in the process articulated itself as nation. Much of the valorization of this nation-state was done by making heroes of its political founders, twentieth-century Egyptian nationalists and the military leaders who revolted against the monarchy, and by denigrating its enemies, the former monarchy, the colonial powers and Islamicist rebels.

Given Egyptian television's historic imbrication with the authoritarian Egyptian state, and the fact that the then current regime of Hosni Mubarak traced its political legitimacy directly back to the coup which overthrew Farouq, what had changed to allow a series that poked gaping holes in the official version of history to appear on Egyptian television? How, in other words, did this humanizing portrayal of an officially reviled figure appear on Egyptian screens in the context of a state that is known for being hyper-sensitive to criticism and overly concerned with defining Egyptian history?

The short answer is that serial was not an Egyptian production, at least not in a straightforward sense. While *Malek Farouq* was ultimately broadcast on Egyptian state television, using the Egyptian dialect of Arabic, and with pointedly Egyptian interests at its narrative heart, the show was, like most large-budget contemporary Arab language televisual and filmic output, a transnational production. Written by an Egyptian woman, Lamis Gaber, *Malek Farouq* was directed by a Syrian, the lead role was acted by another Syrian, the production was partially financed by the Middle East Broadcast Center, a pan-Arab satellite broadcaster based in Dubai but with ties to the Saudi ruling family, and was ultimately broadcast on multiple satellite and terrestrial stations throughout the Arabic Middle East and, in fact, the entire world.

Although high quality politically serious drama had been produced for and broadcast on state-controlled Egyptian television before, no programme had ever questioned the received wisdom of state-centered nationalism before. Previous quality programmes, such as *Leyaali al Hilmiyya* (1987-1995) (Abdel Hafez 1987), had tackled contentious subjects in Egyptian history but always from a foundational state-nationalist perspective. Before the satellite era, the only producers with access to the Egyptian market were those legitimated and funded by the Egyptian state. By 2007 the Egyptian state's grip over Egyptian audiences had been loosened.

Historical transformations in Egyptian broadcasting

The contemporary regime of transnational satellite broadcasting in the Arab world supersedes (though does not entirely eliminate) the state-controlled model of pedagogical broadcasting that dominated Arab broadcasting prior to the mid 1990s. It is important to get a sense of this previous era of broadcasting, especially as regards the use that Gamal Abdel Nasser (and later state regimes) made of state media in inculcating a state-oriented sense of Egyptian nationalism amongst Egyptian viewers and an Egyptian-centered notion of pan-Arabism amongst Arab radio and television audiences. A brief discussion of the history of Egyptian media and its use in creating the discursive conditions of nation, nationality and nationalism, can provide some insight into the trans-national, post-state regime of cultural representation and distribution embodied by contemporary satellite broadcasting and other forms of cultural production and distribution. Although these new media regimes are profoundly different technologically and in their potential transnational reach, they are built on the objective (studios, established flows of financing, narrative strategies) and subjective (talent, ideology) foundations of what came before.

The historically utilitarian use of Egyptian broadcasting shows that, contrary to hyperbolic statements about the transformative novelty of satellite broadcasting, transnational tendencies and regional wills to power being part of the Arab media since its earliest days. Egyptian broadcasting, traced historically, reminds us to be aware of context. Regional expansion, in broadcasting, the economy, or military presence, is not merely a function of technology, but of political will. The players and even the ideology might have changed, but the impulse to construct a pan-Arab audience has its historical antecedents.

With the 1952 Free Officers Revolution Egyptian broadcasting abruptly changed hands from the regime of King Farouq to the revolutionary forces. Although the Egyptian press would not be nationalized until 1960, Egyptian radio was already a state monopoly and was thus property of the revolutionary government from the beginning of the revolution (Boyd 1975, 645). The radio broadcasting headquarters was among the first physical targets of the revolution. Radio became a tool used to interpellate a revolutionary identity among the populations of the Nile Valley. Radio was used to invigorate a sense of nation with many programmes for the first time targeting the *sha'ab* or 'common people' in ways that newspapers, who targeted a literate, cultured elite, never could (Boyd 1975, 647). Nationalist euphoria was then marshalled to create support for controversial government 'reforms' including the nationalization of private land, businesses and the Suez Canal project (Jankowski 2001, 8).

After spending the 1950s consolidating power at home, Nasser turned his ambitions outward and began using broadcasting to diffuse his message of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism to the world at large (Boyd 1975, 648). By 1962, Egyptian radio was broadcasting 140 hours a day of programming on

short- and medium-wave in thirty languages (American University Washington, 1964). Nasser authorized broadcasts to various audiences in line with his philosophy of Egypt being at the heart of the Arab, Muslim, and African 'circles of influence' (Nasser et al 1959, 69). He opened Cairo's radio facilities to (friendly) political opposition figures from within these spheres.

What leaders of target nations would call meddling, Nasser called Egypt's new vital sphere of influence. In describing this sphere, Nasser used rhetoric that would not seem out of place in contemporary discussions about the internet and satellite television.

> The era of isolation is now gone. Gone also are the days when barbed wire marked the frontiers separating and isolating countries. Every country must now look beyond its frontiers to find out from where the currents that affect it spring, how it should live with others. It has become imperative that every country should look around to find out its position and its environment and decide what it can do, what its vital sphere is, where is the scene of its activity and what its positive role can be in this troubled world. (Nasser et al 1959, 53)

Chief among Nasser's ideological targets were what he called 'the Arab common people' (*al sha'ab al 'arab)*, which included the whole Arabic-speaking region. Nasser pursued this audience with the *Sawt al Arab* or 'Voice of the Arabs' broadcasts which began service in 1953, shortly after the Egyptian revolution (Boyd 1975, 645). *Sawt al Arab* was broadcast directly to Arabic-speaking nations through massive, capital-intensive transponders. Anticipating satellite broadcasting fifty years later, this was the first time that Arabs were postulated as a cohesive, single audience by electronic broadcasting. However, while many contemporary satellite broadcasters see pan-Arab audiences as a linguistically-bound group of consumers, Nasser's 'Voice of the Arabs' saw them as citizens of an imagined Arab state, individual units of a greater potential political rather than economic power. It was this ideological belief in the greater 'Arab nation' that allowed Nasser to declare himself the sole 'voice of the Arabs.'

In the 1960s the appeal, and unifying power, of *Sawt al Arab* began to wane as other countries in the region began instituting their own broadcasting services and, according to Boyd, audiences began to become more sophisticated about media messages (Boyd 1975, 651). The Egyptian state turned to the new electronic medium of television to spread its messages.

Like radio, it was taken for granted that television was to broadcast and serve a national vision. The discursive environment that surrounded the new medium gave it meaning as a key site in the production of the proper Egyptian public. 'One of the goals of television is to create public opinion', says Abdel Monieum Al Hefni, an early Egyptian writer on the medium. 'If there were a way to distinguish the Arab nation these days that way would be to name it (the age of)

the rapid development in the mechanisms of public opinion […] and perhaps the most important of factors that have influenced this […] are the press, broadcasting and cinema' (Al Hefni 1962, 1).

Public opinion, properly constituted, supported the government's ambition of producing, out of the raw materials of its people, a distinctly *modern* nation. 'If we look at Arab television, local television, we find that it is a program of modern development' (Umar 1964, 3). In this way, television was no different than radio, newspapers, literature or any form of official public culture that came before it. Egypt, since the 1850s, had been transfixed by questions of modernity and progress (see Armbrust 1996).

The Satellite Era

If we argue that contemporary Arabic broadcasting was transforming other aspects of Arab social life, the first difficulty is to define Arab broadcasting. As the prolific writer on Arabic television Naomi Sakr points out, 'For a phenomenon characterized by ever increasing diversity and contradiction the epithet "Arab television" may imply an undue sense of coherence' (Sakr 2007, 1). In other words, in seeking to discuss contemporary Arab satellite broadcasting we are presuming that such an object exists outside of our naming it.

The reality is that the experience of watching satellite television in the southern Mediterranean can be a frustrating exercise in incoherence. With access to well over 300 separate television channels being broadcast from three main satellite systems and at least six streams, including NileSat 101 and 102, ArabSat 1 and 2, and Hotbird 1 and 2, dissonance is standard. The languages of the broadcasts on NileSat and ArabSat, the two systems aimed specifically at the Middle East, is mostly Arabic but also includes Farsi, Kurdish, Turkish, Imazigh (Berber), English, French, German, Italian and others. Hotbird's broadcast languages include Arabic, English, French, German, Russian, Slovak, Czech, Polish and Armenian. Neither linguistic nor geographical parameters, in terms of production, distribution and consumption, help us to identify an essential Arab satellite television. Arabic-language television is produced and broadcast not just in the Middle East but also in Europe, Asia and the Americas. Much of the programming on 'Arabic' television was produced in the West and in Latin America and only later transcribed, if at all, into Arabic. Perhaps the larger point here is that definitions that seek some sort of essence of Arab satellite broadcasting, just as those that seek an essential 'Arab' or an essential 'Egyptian Nation' might have worked in the era of state-centred 'imagined communities' but are no longer satisfying, even as provisional definitions. These essentializing definitions are unsatisfying because they seek to describe something that is not there. Either the concept of Arab television is too small to incorporate the global flow of cultural production that uses satellite broadcasting to distribute programmes consumed by any audience that considers itself Arabic, or it is too

large to describe a cultural product that is produced and largely consumed in a particular country, even though it is distributed to a far wider audience.

What is clear about Arab satellite broadcasting is, like radio and television before it, it was constructed with political and social goals of social unity in mind. Already posited as an *Arab* project by virtue of having arisen from an Arab League mandate, early discussion on the technology centred around its potential to unify Arabs. According to Ali Al Mashtat, the director general of Arabsat in 1985, the satellite would enhance '... rapid economic growth, increasing cultural exchanges and the awareness of the Arab people of [...] their role on the international scene (Durra and Christie 1985). Latif Jassim, the Iraqi Minister of Information (whose government was involved in a war with the non-Arab Iranians at the time) spelled out the discursive conditions the new satellite would be subject to: 'This is a national strategic project which realizes the national ambitions of the Arab people …' (Durra and Christie 1985). And yet the way in which concerns over the cultural potential of the new satellite were handled speak more to a reality of splintered Arab states than a single Arab nation. Although the initial satellite created the space on its C-band for direct broadcasting of a 'community' television channel to the entire Arab world these broadcasts did not take place. Arab ministers of information could not agree on the educational and entertainment content to appear on the community channel and thus blocked its broadcast (Kavanaugh 1998, 92).

In 1989 the long-serving Egyptian Information Minister Safwat Sharif envisioned the specific goal for Egyptian satellite broadcasting as dealing with 'Arab' problems (as opposed to simply Egyptian ones) and should not be 'limited to the restricted national context' (Sakr 2001, 32). Later Sharif charged Egyptian satellite television with 'safeguarding Arab and Egyptian national security' (Sakr 2001, 33) in the face of oppositional extremist Muslim organizations arrayed against the state.

Malek Farouq and the discursive nation

Malek Farouq thus enters an imperfect Arabic-language and Egyptian public sphere at the fulcrum of technological, political and narrative transformations. Nationalists have been conditioned to recognize the pedagogical power of television, but now the pedagogical masters are not Egyptian. *Malek Farouq* comes to prominence during the turbulent endgame of the Hosni Mubarak regime, four years before he was overthrown by a seemingly popular movement. Its arrival in public discourse in the Arabic-speaking world is matched by a deep conceptual ambivalence about the present and future ideological security of not just Egypt, but any nation that has relied on control of narratives to maintain control of ideology and politics. The series arrives at precisely the moment in which Twitter, Facebook and other forms of social media as well as satellite television,

cinema and literature materially demonstrate that smooth control over the proper narratives of social life is a thing of the past.

What can we find in the public reaction to the series that helps us to analyze the narrative and political tensions of its contemporary moment? The critical reaction to the popular series can be divided into three main topics: nostalgia for the material past, nostalgia for the political past and fear about 'foreign' intrusion into 'Egyptian' history. Each of these topics relate both to the ontological history of Egyptian broadcasting and the epistemological history presented in *Malek Farouq*. In other words, ontological history provides us with a description of the increasing political fragmentation of the Egyptian nation in the latter part of the twentieth century. The epistemological representation in *Malek Farouq* plays upon the anxiety caused by the political fragmentation and offers an appealing remedy in a representation and retelling of that fractious past.

Public discourse about Arabic serials serves a vital role in garnering viewers and measuring the success of a particular show. With upwards of seventy Arabic serials released during the single month of Ramadan each year, the ability of particular shows to attract attention makes the difference between success and failure, especially for profit-generating ancillary markets such as reruns, foreign rebroadcast, and even DVD sales. This public discourse can take the form of conversation between viewers, which is difficult to measure, newspapers, magazines, television talk shows, online newspapers, magazines, and blogs. Even in a situation where programming is presold for immediate broadcast as well as for later redistribution, the 'buzz' generated by a particular show has ramifications for the sale of the next year's productions. Having a hit series that generates public discussion can make it easier for a star to secure a bigger salary in the next round of Ramadan serials, it can make it easier for a director to presell their next show, and it can make gathering initial financing easier.

Malek Farouq served as the focus for public political discussion as to the historical merits of their main characters and the era in which they lived. It generated a significant number of newspaper articles *before* it was broadcast, centering on the contentious effort to produce, sell, and broadcast the series in spite of its controversial nature. In addition to this, a number of public discussions focused on the problematic nature of 'foreign' participation in Egyptian stories.

Much of the discourse centred around the perceived quality of the series, especially on how the era of the 1930s and 1940s was visually reproduced. A common lament was that Egypt was much less populated, cleaner, and supposedly much more prosperous in those decades. Adel Darwish's comments, writing in the international Arab daily *Al Sharq Al Awasat* are an example. 'As the director told me in person, despite his best efforts he was unable to obtain permission to film on the historical sites of Ras al-teen and Abdeen palaces, so he had to build his own sets and décor. Building sets from scratch avoids the visual errors that may be encountered by the camera in (contemporary iterations of)

architecture. In the days of King Farouq, the streets of Egypt were part of the beautiful environment of comprehensive architectural and technical and cultural achievement' (Darwish 2007).

In other words, much of the runaway success of this production lay in its ability to mimic nostalgic visual representations of a lost past to an audience that seemed to be decidedly unhappy with the material realities of 2007. It took a transnational conglomeration of workers and money, working under the global political and structural conditions of 2007 to tell a story about the simplicity and seeming national social cohesion of a past cultural iteration that no longer exists precisely because of the globalizing technological and political changes that have allowed this programme to be produced and distributed.

A number of critics praised the show for simply *raising* the topic of the political past in the contemporary moment. This perspective tended to emphasize the positive pedagogical elements of unlocking a forbidden past. One article says the *Farouq* series 'left behind a severe case of political and social controversy in the Egyptian street, in the press, and in articles by leading writers and researchers, after the personal and human dimensions of the king, which were unknown to current generations, became known' (Madkour 2008). Another writer recognizes that the programme sparked an important nostalgia amongst Egyptian viewers for a 'better time'. 'Despite the mistakes, I am thankful to [broadcasters] MBC for reminding Egyptians [of their past], including those counterfeiters who have tried to obscure history. It appears that people yearn to know the facts and details of the era of good times of the modern Egyptian nation' (Darwish 2007).

A common refrain of critics was that the show took the *true,* i.e. ontological, history of the nation out of the hands of the state, which had been interestedly manipulating the epistemological history, and put it back in the hands of the nation itself. As one newspaper article put it, 'It raised issues of contemporary Egyptian history in the street after [these issues] had been [locked] inside the halls of universities and partisan newspapers with limited circulation. [This is important because] most young people including university graduates do not know much about the history of contemporary Egypt. He that does not know of his past, lives a confused present and has no future' (Farid 2007).

Another author concurs that *Farouq* the series has stirred and muddied the pool of Egyptian history. 'Perhaps the high viewership of the series can be explained by a desire among Egyptians to see that entire era of history which has been excluded from the consciousness of more than half a century, a history full of cover-ups and an abrogation of all that preceded it. It has been as if the history of Egypt did not begin until after [the revolution of 1952.] Just as the pharaohs erased their predecessors from the obelisks so too did these victors tarnish the image of King Farouk in black and white movies that were produced before the

revolution. So the form of this series shocked the mind of the younger generations that found a king different the one in textbooks' (Muharram 2007).

Television writer, historian and social critic Mahmoud Sabit argues that the show succeeded because it brought up issues of democracy in a country sorely lacking it.

> What caught the [public] imagination, is that they realized that the monarchy was a constitutional monarchy, that [Farouq] was the head of state and not the head of government. The head of government was a prime minister who was brought in through a democratic process, that Egypt had had 25 years of a representational system. When you take that and compare it to 50 years of benign military dictatorship, people are surprised. There is a whole generation of Egyptians who are getting a rapid education through the internet and that's telling them different things than Nasser told them as far as history and the background of Egypt is concerned. There is a search for the truth that compromises Nasserist revisionism. If you've always been told that you're not sufficiently educated to participate in a democratic process, but now [using the show] you can point to a democratic process that existed […] that changes things. (M. Sabit, personal communication, 21 December 2008)

Nationalism and *Malek Farouq*

The most marked criticism of the series came from those diametrically opposed to a reconsideration of the Egyptian twentieth century, the nationalists. Many of those critics who opposed the missteps and corruption of the current regime found it difficult to stomach the notion that foreigners were being allowed to manipulate the pedagogical element of television to tell forbidden stories. For example, while lightly criticizing the programme for its historical lapses one writer makes a case for Egyptian specificity when it comes to discussions of the nation. 'The director, despite his diligent efforts and talent, is a foreigner to Egypt, being a Syrian. He and the writer acted as if they had no doubt as to the interactions between the people and the royal palace. What they should have done is hire a team of historians and specialists to review the script as well as the costumes and period' (Darwish 2007). By emphasizing (dubiously) that in BBC productions, for example, a team of experts is brought on to review every detail of the show, Darwish is also lamenting the quality of Arab cultural output generally, a common theme in Arab self-criticism.

Among Darwish's complaints about the errors in the serial were the use of the wrong wrist-watches and costumes for the time period. However, a more serious error occurred in the anachronistic use of political terminology. 'The term "Arab nation" has not appeared yet in the lexicon of journalism or political expression. It was not (unlike in the series) yet used by any Egyptian politician in the parliament or in public speeches. It only came about after years of the

expression appearing in the literature of Michel Aflaq and the Baathists in Syria, and the countries of the Fertile Crescent. Egypt was outside this area geographically and ideologically […] The trend of cooperation between the Arabic-speaking countries did not materialize until the war in Palestine, years after (the time the series took place)' (Darwish 2007).

The theme of undue influence by Syrians was a common one in the discourse on *Malek Farouq* as it has been in discourse on contemporary 'Egyptian' television generally. In a *Masri Al Youm* (*Egypt Today*) article written before the series' debut, this theme was made explicit. In an article entitled 'Differences, Beatings and Insults on the Set of King Farouq', the article highlights the difficulties of Syrian involvement in Egyptian television. 'It all seems calm and harmonious on the set of *King Farouq*, but when we talked to Egyptian technicians involved in the production we discovered sharp differences between them and the Syrian director, Hatem Ali, as well as his assistants. In a previous interview, cinematographer Muhammed Suleiman […] told us that the most difficult thing about working with Syrians was that they were overly excitable (rageful) in their dealings, and this was confirmed by Egyptians working on the set of King Farouq' (Salama 2007).

The article goes on to detail a series of petty accusations against the Syrian director, focusing on his lack of desire or ability to communicate with the Egyptians on the set. 'After four months of filming, there have still been no friendships developed between the Egyptians and the Syrians' (Salama 2007). The article describes how a Syrian assistant director 'beat up' an assistant make-up technician for getting in shot. It concludes with the frustrated director, Hatim Ali, denying all the accusations and asking, 'Why do all Egyptians keep assuming these bad things about me?' (Salama 2007). While the article is poorly written and seems purposefully inflammatory against the Syrians, it is indicative of the tension that lies beneath the surface of transnational Arabic television and the anxiety that Egyptians face in the contemporary space of regional cultural production.

Most of the discourse around *Malek Farouq*, however, did not focus on the Syrian participation as much on how Farouq impacted on accepted perceptions of history. One article, entitled 'King Farouq: The beginning of a New Phase in Television' comments on the sheer amount of attention given to the show. 'Never before has any television program in the Arab world seen the publication of this quantity of articles and commentaries, special issues, and expanded coverage in newspapers and magazines' (Farid, 2007). The author laments the fact that such an important serial with its unparalleled commercial and critical success 'was the production of a Saudi company, not Egyptian. It is truly regrettable that the initial broadcast was not on an Egyptian [terrestrial] television station' (Farid, 2007).

For committed nationalists, the most persistent problem of *Malek Farouq* was that it presented history incorrectly. This particularly matters given the historic view of televisual audiences as in desperate need of, and thus of course susceptible to, pedagogical training. When that training comes at the hands of foreigners with conflicting ideologies the nation is under duress.

For example, Osama Anwar Okasha, the most famous Egyptian television writer and a staunch intellectual of a nationalist bent, accused the show of slavishly promoting monarchy at the behest of the Saudi financiers of the show (Amer 2007). In an article entitled 'Historians: Desperation Makes Egyptians Sing the Praises of the Monarchy' Ibrahim Moawad claims that the serial has transformed Egyptian public opinion in favor of the monarchy. The article quotes a professor of modern history from one of Egypt's leading universities arguing that combining Saudi Arabian financing (a society that supports kingship) with the underlying anxiety in contemporary Egyptian society, results in the series serving as 'propaganda for a monarchical system' (Moawad 2007).

The article quotes another Egyptian historian, Asim Desouki, as criticizing the monarchy as 'a corrupt authoritarian regime, an Albanian family that sapped the Egyptian people of their strength through poverty and hunger before being shot down by the Free Officers' Revolution' (Moawad 2007). Also accusing the series author Lamis Al Gaber of being a lackey of the Saudis, he attributes *Malek Farouq's* popularity to dissatisfaction with the contemporary Republican regime and contemporary economic malaise much in the same way that poor people are drawn to the nostalgic myth of a perfect Islamic past. But this nostalgia for the past 'is felt by people who have never experienced this period. The average worker would refuse to return to this capitalist system that had no social security and did not preserve the dignity of the worker' (Moawad 2007).

Regardless of the conclusions drawn by individual viewers, the fact remains that *Malek Farouq* stirred up nostalgia for and questions about the Egyptian past. One letter to the editor, entitled 'Farouq was Neither an angel nor a demon', notes that the show served as the catalyst for important discussions about the monarchy. 'People are asking: is this the real Farouq? The real Nahass Pascha? And if this was really them, how have we been so deceived these past 50 years? The revolution has distorted everything that came before it and tainted the ex-king with accusations of corruption and licentious behavior' (Okasha 2007). The writer, a retired air force general, concludes that history is more complicated than commonly presented. 'It took more than 50 years for people to discover the lies promoted by the media about the monarchy and his men. We'll spend another 50 discovering the facts of the 1952 revolution. What we hope is to wake up from a coma in which we can open the pages of history and put events and people in proper balance' (Okasha 2007).

Conclusion

Among the widely held tenets of different iterations of globalization theory is that the nation-state (in general concept and specific practice) is steadily losing power in the face of such varied opponents as transnational capital, transnational non-governmental organizations (either in favor or against transnational capital), and anti-national religious ideology and organizations . And yet what *Malek Farouq* and other transnationally produced series suggest is that while the locus of nationalist ideological production might have shifted, along with wider shifts in the communications infrastructure, away from the nation-state, the production of the *ideological* nation has in no way ceased or even appeared to slow. This disjuncture between the nation and the state, between official and private construction of the ideal nation (and the ideal state) is fertile territory in which to explore contemporary articulations of communal identity.

Without committing the teleological fallacy of suggesting that the 2011 upheavals in Egypt and the Arab world were the direct results of shifts in the production, distribution and consumption of information and entertainment media, what can *Malek Farouq* tell us about new forms of subjective reality in the Arabic speaking Middle East?

In *Malek Farouq* we are presented with the seemingly holistic and natural vision of a just Egyptian nation fighting for its democratic independence and by extension the independence of its citizens and *all* Arabs. When studied as a specific narrative, put into the context of the world in 2007, the ambivalent tensions and absences of the narrative become much clearer. These underlying tensions include the dearth of a true participatory political structure for Egyptian (or any Arab) citizens and the pronounced absence of any acknowledgement of the power of Islamicist discourse in contemporary Egyptian society. Analytically, then, the ephemeral greatness and dignity of the timeless Egyptian nation articulated in the shows can be seen to stand not just for its historical self but also for its opposite: the nation's failure and the failures of the contemporary state to achieve true independence, dignity, and democracy. And if the political upheavals that came a few years later can be said to mean anything, they certainly indicated anxiety about the political future and past.

In other words, if contemporary transnational narratives of the nation seem to gloss over the ambivalences inherent in expressions of nationalism, they also succeed in articulating them. Narrative, as Alan Nadel suggests, addresses the incommensurability between the ontological excess of reality and the uses of epistemological history. Narratives act as the source and the 'condition of possibility' for facts (Nadel 1995, 3). Narratives don't simply condition a wider culture meaning but individuals, too, construct a 'self' out of disparate activity made important by narratives which in turn create out of that disparate activity 'acts of meaning' (Nadel 1995, 3). Narrating history, then, is inextricably bound

with creating identities, on personal, national and wider levels and it is an inherently political act (Dirlik 2006).

How does history change when it has been loosed from the bonds of the nation? History is presented as a *personal* narrative platform and not solely a *national* or communal one. Part of the process that decouples national histories from the nations that embody them is an increasing privatization of thought, a personalization of the national. In the contemporary transnational mediated environment of Facebook and Twitter, the individual self becomes the carefully curated centre of history. Unlike academic history, which in its traditional forms at least outwardly aspires to an impersonal description of 'the facts,' historical drama works precisely by making the past personal and invoking the ephemeral concept of identity. By aesthetically rendering the past in the present and by psychologizing mythical figures, contemporary historical drama creates the aesthetic and affective conditions for wider historical narratives, national or otherwise, to be grafted onto personal narratives.

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1   All translations from Arabic to English are by the author.

The faces of history.
The imagined portraits of the Merovingian kings at Versailles (1837-1842)

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> 'One would expect people to remember the past and imagine the future. But in fact, when discoursing or writing about history, they imagine it in terms of their own experience, and when trying to gauge the future they cite supposed analogies from the past; till, by a double process of repetition, they imagine the past and remember the future'. (Namier 1942, 70)

The historian Christian Amalvi observes that during the first half of the nineteenth century, most of the time history books presented a 'succession of dynasties (Merovingians, Carolingians, Capetians), an endless row of reigns put end to end (those of the 'rois fainéants'[1] and of the last Carolingians especially), without any hierarchy, as a succession of fanciful portraits of monarchs, almost interchangeable' (Amalvi 2006, 57). The Merovingian kings' portraits, exhibited in the Museum of French History at the palace of Versailles, could be described similarly: they represent a succession of kings 'put end to end', with imagined 'fanciful' appearances, according to Amalvi. However, this vision disregards their significance for early nineteenth-century French society. Replacing these portraits in the broader context of contemporary history painting, they appear characteristic of a shift in historical apprehension.

The French history painting had slowly drifted away from the great tradition established by Jacques-Louis David's moralistic and heroic vision of ancient history. The 1820s saw a new formation of the historical genre led by Paul Delaroche's sentimental vision and attention to a realistic vision of history, restored to picturesqueness. Representing French history was indeed a way of questioning French national identity, within a society struggling to define itself after the 1789 Revolution, the Napoleonic Empire and the return of the Bourbons to the throne in 1814 (see Bann 1985; Chu and Weisberg 1994; Gadoin and Palmier-Chatelain 2008). The shift in history's interpretation and representation expressed the feeling of uncertain times, and was part of a process of recovery and adaptation to the new era. 'What is France now, and what constitutes French identity?' were major questions, to which art was a privileged way of answering.

Using history as a Bible, painting, but also literature, theatre and music caught a 'historical fever', to which the Merovingian portraits at Versailles are closely related. In these kings' faces, the physical and moral traits of the nation could be revealed, as they work as an embodiment of national identity expressed through national history. They appear as a synthesis of some of the characteristics of the representation of history. Several levels of comprehension can be discerned. Following Serna (2016, 8) these portraits layer four temporalities: the simple past, through the representation of historical facts; the appropriation of the past, which is the result of a mental representation from the artists enriched by historical researches. Thus, they combine the taste for historical veracity which appeared in the 1830s, with imagination. Thirdly, they are a testimony to some of the preoccupations of the artists and their society, and are the aesthetic result of contemporary pictorial tendencies. And last, they question the future, through a back and forth movement between the past, present and future. Additionally, these portraits work on two paradoxical levels of discourse: the heroic vision of the French monarchs is intertwined with a more subjective vision, which induces a difference of scale, from a distant, monumental vision of the kings, to a closer, personal vision. This article studies these different levels of discourse and temporality, which constitute the interest and mystery of these portraits, in order to answer the question: how do these portraits embody the state of mind of French society in the 1840s, questioning its roots and heritage, and through it, its own identity? We shall first consider the social and cultural context, their commissioning by the state, and the historical representations created by the artists. The article will focus specifically on two portraits, *Dagobert I*st and *Clovis II* by Émile Signol (Figures 1 and 2), in order to understand their significance for the contemporary viewer, and what they tell us about the deep identity concerns of uncertain French nineteenth-century society.

Eighteen portraits

The Museum of French History at the palace of Versailles opened its doors in 1837, after several years of intense work led by its architect Frédéric Nepveu, under the orders of King Louis-Philippe (Gaehtgens et al 1984, 57). The aim of those galleries was dear to this 'citizen king'. He had been crowned during the revolution of 1830, put on the throne by the people, especially the bourgeoisie, and wished to be approachable by walking alone in the Paris streets (Marrinan 1988, 4). Striving to secure his place and to honour his legacy, he dedicated a museum to the French nation, a 'centre of popular education' (Gaehtgens et al 1984, 57), tracing its history from its beginnings to 1830. Creating a national museum in the former palace of the French kings was not without significance. Valérie Bajou, former curator of the museum, notes that the palace gave up its former status as a private residence and symbol of an oppressive monarchy, in order to become a public and historic monument (Bajou 1999, 239). In this

Figure 1: Léopold Massard after Émile Signol, 'Portrait of Dagobert I, King of Austrasia, Neustria and Burgundy (d. 638)' (1842), in Charles Gavard, *Galeries Historiques de Versailles* (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1838-1842). © Sainte Menehould; Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, 2012.

temple to the nation's glory, the representation of the history of France, closely associated with the monarchy's history, became the privileged medium of a patriotic and royalist hagiographic discourse (Sabatier 2013, 12-13).Political disagreements, clashing opinions, conflicting memories of the Revolution of 1789 were put aside; regaining prestige, unity and stability became the dominant theme. The discourse sponsored by the museum also accentuated continuity and dynastic legitimacy, and allowed Louis-Philippe to stand more firmly on a throne that he did not take for granted (Gaehtgens 1984, 57-79). During the fitting out, the museum centralized contemporary production of historical paintings and portraits. The Maison du Roi made hundreds of orders, and transferred many canvases displayed in other museums or other and palaces. Among these orders for new work was a large number of original or copied portraits, including the series of portraits discussed here.

The seventy-two portraits of the French kings were brought together in the 'Kings' room', displayed in Marie-Antoinette's former apartments. Eighteen of

Figure 2: Léopold Massard after Émile Signol, 'Clovis II, King of Austrasia, Neustria, Burgundy' (1842), in Charles Gavard, *Galeries Historiques de Versailles* (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1838-1842). © Sainte Menehould; Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, 2012.

these paintings represented the Merovingian dynasty. Louis-Pierre Anquetil, one of the most widely-read French historians of the nineteenth century,[2] listed twenty-one in his *Histoire de France* (Anquetil et al 1838, 143), but the Maison du Roi chose to exclude paintings of the kings whose origins were too doubtful (Pharamond, Clodion, Mérovée and Childéric I).This allowed the series to start with Clovis (c. 466-511), who had symbolic significance as the first Christian king of what would become France. Seven history painters (none of whom were portraitists) were commissioned between 1835 and 1842. Their talent and fame varied, but each received five hundred francs per portrait (Archives Nationales), which went against the practice at the time of adjusting the price of a painting according to the artist's fame.

History painter François-Louis Dejuinne was commissioned to paint Clovis I, and produced a frontal full-length portrait that contrasted with the head-and-shoulders portraits of other kings. The religious painter Jean-Louis Bézard painted the two sons and successors of Clovis, Childebert I (King of Paris and King of Orléans from 511 to 558) and Chlothar I (King of the Franks from 558

to 561). Jean-Joseph Dassy provided Charibert's portrait (King of Paris from 561 to 567). Atala Varcollier, a copyist, and god-daughter of Chateaubriand (Anquetil's collaborator), painted Chilperic I (King of Soissons from 561 to 584), a full-face portrait against a surprising green background, again contrasting with the rest of the series. Georges Rouget (Jacques-Louis David's favoured pupil), Raymond Monvoisin (who led the newly founded academy of Santiago de Chile) and Émile Signol (a religious painter who produced the most fascinating paintings of the series) shared the last Kings of the dynasty: Chlothar II, known as the Younger (King of Neustria then King of the Franks from 584 to 629) by Monvoisin; Dagobert I (King of Austrasia then King of the Franks from 622 to c. 639); Clovis II known as the Lazy (King of Neustria and Burgundy from 639 to 657) by Signol; Chlothar III (King of Neustria and Burgundy from 663 to 673) by Monvoisin; and Childeric II (King of the Franks of Austrasia, then of the Franks from 662 to 675) by Signol. These last three kings died in their twenties. Signol also painted Thierry III (King of the Franks and of Neustria, then of the Franks from 673 to c. 679) and Dagobert III (King of the Franks from 711 to 715, from age twelve to his death at sixteen). Georges Rouget painted Clovis III (King of Austrasia from 682 to 695) as pale and affected. Monvoisin delivered the portrait of Chilperic II (initially a monk, he became King of the Franks of Neustria and Burgundy, and finally King of the Franks from 715 to 721). Finally, Signol was recommissioned for the portraits of Thierry IV de Chelles (King of the Franks from 721 to 737, the last genuine Merovingian King) and of Childeric III (of unknown descent, he is the last ruling member of the Merovingian dynasty and led the Frank realms from 743 to 751) (Geary 2011).

Reading such a list may seem tedious, but the detail is important, in order to have a clear vision of the series we are dealing with, including the gap lying between the generic term of 'Kings of France' used during the nineteenth century and the historical reality. Indeed, after the accession of Clovis, the first King of the Franks, the territory split into several kingdoms, which his successors sometimes failed to keep together. Not all the Merovingian Kings were actually styled 'King of the Franks', and the terms of 'France' and the 'kingdom of France' would not exist until centuries after the Merovingians' reigns (see Werner and Favier 1984; Favier and Caron 1984).

The portraits, however, had to symbolize the permanence of the monarchy, and the simplified historical discourse of the Versailles museum inaccurately assimilated the Merovingian kings as kings of France (as did some contemporary historians).[3] The idea was to establish continuity between the monarchs through the image and the museographic set which followed the chronological order of the succession. We must note, however, that if efforts were made in order to ease the reading of the ensemble, disparities in style and quality impede its linearity and continuity.

A veneer of historical authenticity: The use of sources by the artists

These history portraits come from a long iconographic tradition, studied by Francis Haskell in particular (1993), inherited from the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the 'galleries' of famous characters – books printed to enlighten the reader by the contemplation of great men (and sometimes women) – were a huge success. Alexandre de Laborde, the author of *Versailles ancien et moderne* (1841) announced 'We have sought to reproduce the features as faithfully as we could, from all the elements that reached us, medals, seals, busts or portraits' (Laborde 1841, 313-14). This portrait tradition asserted the most careful attention to the sources they used to reconstitute the faces of the past, as Haskell notes, but the reality was often less clear, and many portraits were in great part derived entirely from the engravers' imagination (Haskell 1993, 79-81). As a result, the portraits of Versailles are in most part imagined, but rest upon historical research. Louis-Philippe himself wanted the works shown to be as accurate as possible, historically speaking, and throughout his reign, he encouraged the deepening of past knowledge and the improvement of the role of historians. He therefore requested the support of the renowned historians François Guizot, Jules Michelet, Adolphe Thiers and Augustin Thierry (Gervereau and Constans 2005, 31). Guizot in particular, as his minister, was truly the architect of this rebirth in historical studies. He led the publication of many books and memoirs taken from the archives and created the first learned society, the Société de l'Histoire de France, in 1833 (Guizot 1822-30).

The painters commissioned for this work therefore drew from different sources, among which were ancient iconographic documents (or identified as such but often of a later date). Raymond Monvoisin was obviously inspired by the representation of the grave of Chlothar II the Younger for his portrait. The 'sepulchral stone' dating from the sixth century, on which Chlothar II is engraved, is restored by a drawing in the 1800 catalogue by Alexandre Lenoir (founder of the museum of the Monuments Français: Figure 3), and by a drawing from the collection of scholar Roger de Gaignières.[4]

The long hair and beard, the shape of the crown, the sceptre and even the coat are taken from this sculpted stone slab. François-Louis Dejuinne was also inspired by Clovis's funeral slab in the necropolis of Saint-Denis (Figure 4). The hieratic, frontal posture of the king, his long coat and the money bag hanging from his belt, the shape of his crown, the beard and the moustache – these elements are taken from the recumbent statue, which dates from the later date range 1220-1230.[5]

Jean-Louis Bézard makes Chlothar I (Chlothar II's grandfather), sit on a throne which Lenoir also reproduced in his catalogue, just above the drawing of Chlothar's slab (Lenoir 1800, 166). This seat, which was probably created in the seventh or eighth century, is known today as the 'throne of Dagobert' and is
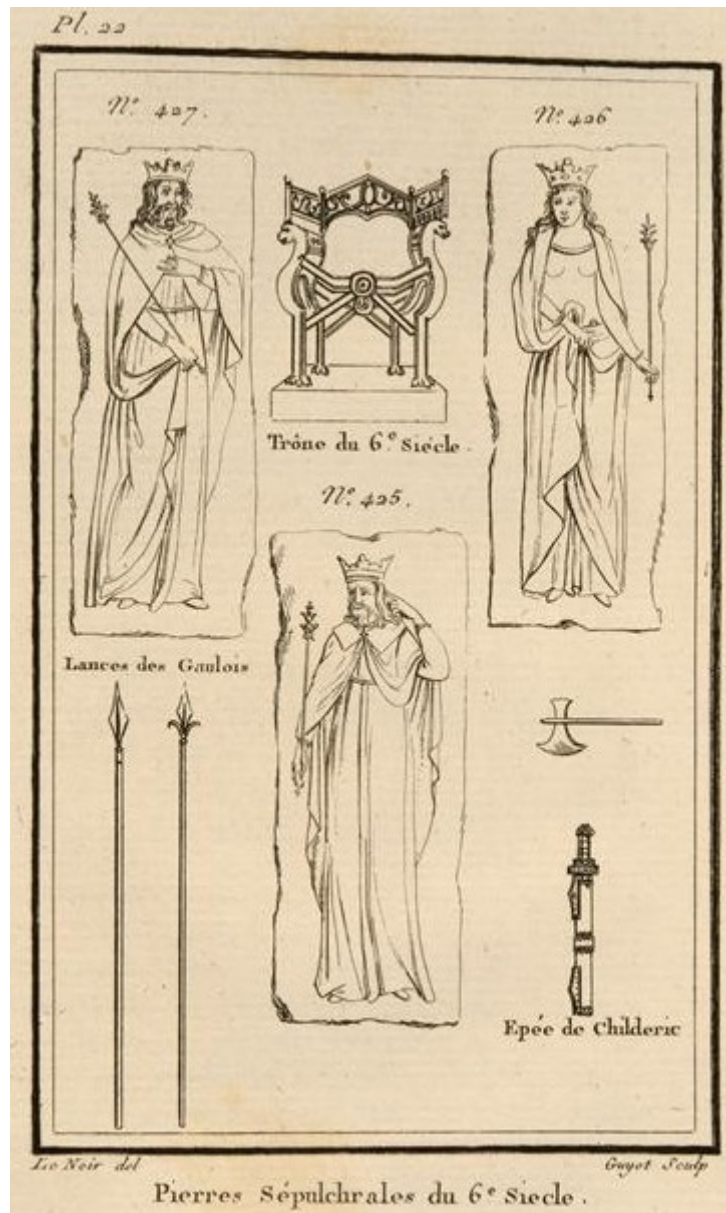
Figure 3: Alexandre Lenoir, Laurent Guyot, Musée des Monuments Français; tome 1 par Alexandre Lenoir: 166, planche 22, 1800. Bibliothèque de l'Institut National d'Histoire de l'Art, collections Jacques Doucet.

kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Bézard kept only the panthers' heads, which he moved from the feet to the armrests in order for them to be more visible.

Margot Renard

Figure 4: Léopold Massard after François-Louis Dejuinne, 'Clovis, King of the Franks (465-511)' (1835), in Charles Gavard, *Galeries Historiques de Versailles* (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1838-1842). © Sainte Menehould; Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, 2012.

The artists also drew from the works of historians and historically reliable information for inspiration for the costumes, attributes of power, and ideas about attitude and appearance. In some cases they turned to visual and textual documentation. For example, in order to paint his *Pharamond élevé sur le pavois,* displayed in the French history rooms, Michel-Philibert Génot was advised in 1845 to consult the Roger de Gaignières collection and Bernard de Montfaucon's *Monuments de la Monarchie Françoise* (1729-1733) (Gaehtgens et al 1984, 79 and 382). Furthermore, Jean-Joseph Dassy, who was to paint Charibert, seems to have read the work of historian Louis-Pierre Anquetil, or the eighteenth-century historian François-Eudes de Mézeray, from whom Anquetil also took inspiration (Mézeray 1755, 229). The artists often consulted both historians. Anquetil tells us that when 'inaugurated', the Merovingian kings were

dressed with 'a crimson tunic, a pearl and diamond diadem across their forehead, placed upon long braided hair' (Anquetil 1838, 182). Indeed, Charibert, as represented by Dassy (Figure 5), wears a diadem of pearls and gold, giving a jewelled effect. The highly-groomed hairstyle, smooth across the head and with long curls at the temples, and the indecisive posture, give a curiously anachronistic impression: the king seems to have been taken out of a theatre performance. This impression is enhanced by Dassy's rather glittering style, with the gleaming gold sceptre, the contrasting red and the tactile texture of the coat.


Figure 5: Léopold Massard after Jean-Joseph Dassy, 'Charibert, Frank King of Paris and of Western Gaul (died in 567)' (1837), in Charles Gavard, *Galeries Historiques de Versailles* (Paris: Imprimerie royale, 1838-1842). © Sainte Menehould; Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, 2012.

In opposition to this care for verisimilitude, some adjustments were made against historical reality. Clovis, as the founder of the French monarchy, holds a sceptre with the fleur-de-lis, which is part of the royal regalia, symbols of French monarchical power. However, the fleur-de-lis only became the emblem of the French kings under the Capetians, during the twelfth century. This symbol, however, was so much associated with the French monarchy in the collective imagination, that it was deemed natural, and desirable, to add it to Clovis's portrait in order to signify his status as the father of the monarchy. Several other kings also bear a sword, similar to Charlemagne's sword and those carried by kings at their coronation in Rheims. This was also an anachronism, since this custom making the king the defender of the Church only dated from the twelfth to thirteenth century. But it symbolically assimilated the Merovingian kings with the French kings, already working in their own time for national glory.

The perception of the Merovingian kings during the nineteenth century

The portraits of the Merovingian kings work as a series, but they are a part of the broader ensemble of French kings' portraits. They constitute a kind of chapter in a continuous historical narration. According to Hayden V. White's works on historical discourse, the events (here the Merovingian kings) are 'encoded so as to appear as phases of a *process* with a discernible beginning, middle, and end' (White 1975, 54). Every portrait of the French kings is, indeed, 'encoded' in order to mark continuity but also an evolution of costumes, fashions and mores, which therefore implies the feeling of progress, an idea inherited from the Enlightenment. Mores seem to 'refine' from the Merovingian kings' barbarian manners to the sophistication of Louis XIV's court and the eighteenth-century Enlightenment.

History-book illustrations inform us further about the image of the 'Merovingian period' (Thierry 1840) in the nineteenth century. Publishers favoured illustrating contemporary historical facts, but the agony of Queen Brunehilde is one of the most represented, and is a good example of the perceptions of this period. Brunehilde, who ruled over Austrasia and Burgundy, [6] fought for years against the King of Neustria Chlothar II and before that against his mother Fredegund. She was finally defeated and made prisoner by Chlothar in 613, which temporarily brought peace between the Frankish realms. After several days of torture, she was attached by her hair, a leg and an arm to a wild horse, and dragged on the ground until she died. Two history books in which illustrations are prominent chose to represent this episode (Figure 6): Louis Michelant, in *Les faits mémorables de l'Histoire de France* (1844), illustrated by history painter Victor Adam, includes it in the four vignettes given to the Merovingian history (Michelant et al 1844, np).

CLOTAIRE II.   ANNÉE 613.
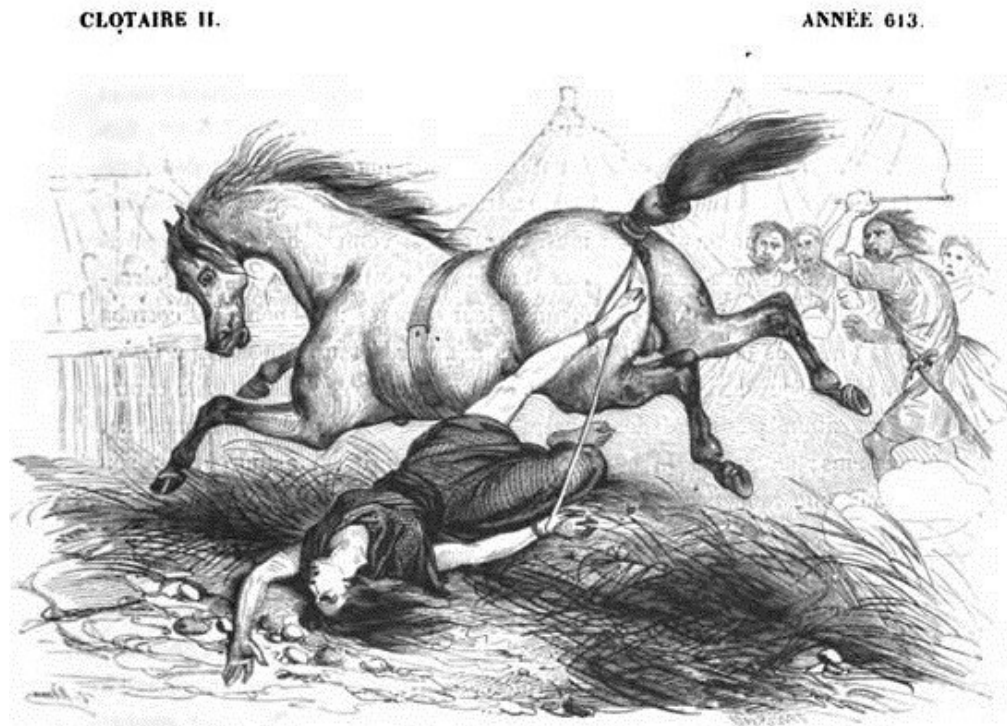
MORT DE BRUNEHAUT.

La mort de Brunehaut fut le tragique dénoûment d'une des plus
intéressantes luttes des temps mérovingiens : celle de l'esprit de civilisa-
tion contre la barbarie; du pouvoir royal contre la fière indépendance
des chefs austrasiens. Brunehaut, fille d'Athanagild, roi des Wisigoths,
fut mariée dans tout l'éclat de sa jeunesse et de sa beauté au roi d'Aus-
trasie Sigebert, petit-fils de Clovis. La jeune reine en arriyant en Aus-

Figure 6: 'Mort de Brunehaut', in Michelant, L, Adam, V, Ségur, P, Faits mémorables de l'histoire
de France...précédés d'une introduction par M. de Ségur...et illustrés de 120 tableaux de M. Victor
Adam (Paris: Aubert et Cie et Didier, 1844), 23. © Google Books

The second book is Théodose Burette's *Histoire de France depuis l'établisse-
ment des Francs dans la Gaule jusqu'en 1830* (Burette 1840, 95), illustrated by
Jules David, famous for his fashion and history engravings. Both represented
the event with similar compositions, focusing on the group of wild horses and
on a half-naked, despairing and helpless Brunehilde, who both seem not to com-
prehend their situation. The episode attracted publishers and artists because of
its extreme violence and graphic efficiency, and because of what it expressed of

the nineteenth-century's feelings about this period. As Michelant stated, the episode represented 'the tragic outcome of one of the most interesting conflicts in the Merovingian times: the spirit of civilization against barbary, royal power against the proud independence of the Austrasian leaders' (Michelant 1844, 23). This statement seems to summarize the perceptions of this period, standing at the turning point between the obscurantism symbolized by Brunehilde, and the civilization brought by Chlothar II's monarchy (despite his cruelty when torturing Brunehilde). In that way Chlothar II could be seen as portending Charlemagne's prestigious reign.

The Merovingians seemed to have attracted and repulsed at the same time: repulsion for a period considered as 'barbarian', along with a fascination for what came out of an era where violence seemed to be common practice. The aesthetics of costumes and accessories in the portraits contributed to this feeling of exoticism (hair left loose, clothes embroidered with gold, unfamiliar patterns). A tension was at work here, a distortion effect, between the distance expressed by the clothing, decorative elements and aesthetics, and the empathy induced by the expressions and attitudes of the characters.

The portraits of Émile Signol

The portraits by Émile Signol are particularly conspicuous and of a high quality. They demonstrate some continuities of the use made of the Merovingian kings' imagery by the portraitists. Signol has mostly represented those whom history recalls as the 'rois fainéants'. This line of princes ruled for sixty years after Dagobert I, in the seventh and eighth centuries. The latter was the last of his dynasty to rule by himself, and played a significant role in improving the judiciary, administrative and tax systems. Anquetil commented dramatically that 'the glory of the Merovingians disappeared with him' (Anquetil 1838, 180). The origin of the expression 'rois fainéants' and the image that historiography remembered from that period came from a severe description by Eginhard in his *Vie de Charlemagne*, written around 829 (Guizot 1824, 123-24). In order to enhance the prestige of Charlemagne, the successor of the lazy kings, Eginhard portrayed a line which 'displayed no vigour', was content with 'just bearing the name of king', travelling 'in a wagon dragged by oxen and driven like peasants by a cowherd' (Guizot 1824, 123-24), inasmuch as their suite, their income and their prestige were small. In most cases, the reigns of these kings were very short (most of them died in their twenties) and were controlled by the mayors of the palace, in charge of administrating each part of the Frankish realms: Burgundy, Neustria and Austrasia. Their position was first asserted under Dagobert, and the administrators kept increasing their power until the kings were nothing more than puppets they controlled in order to serve their own interests.

Dagobert, whom Signol painted first, was therefore the last Merovingian king to benefit from a relatively flattering image in historiography. 'Magnificent

and profligate' Anquetil proclaimed, 'his court's wealth and luxuriousness is praised'. He has 'the ancient laws amended in his presence' and 'likes to mete out justice in public session' (Anquetil 1838, 180). Mézeray was less generous: after describing Dagobert as 'gentle, affable and generous', working 'night and day when granting audience', he portrayed a man carried away with 'the passion of youth and […] the violence of sovereign authority', devoted to the upkeep of a veritable harem of spouses and mistresses, and starving his subjects in order to maintain his extravagant lifestyle. 'He affected to seem rather than being fair' are Mézeray's definitive words (Mézeray 1669, 228-37). In contrast, Michelet's *Histoire de France* described Dagobert as a 'wise and fair, justiciar' king, who first wrote 'the barbarian laws'. He considered him as the 'Solomon of the Franks' who, 'like the Jew Solomon […] shares his time between his concubines and his priests' (Michelet 1835, 250). As we can see, Dagobert's image is relatively constant between historians, but their opinions vary.

Signol, however, abandoned completely the traditional representation of Dagobert, whose portrait was published in books by abbé Velly, Mézeray and Abel Hugo (Victor Hugo's brother), among others (Velly et al 1778, 17; Mézeray 1669, 226; Hugo 1837, plate XXVI). They all present similar facial features for the king of a thick mouth and a strong nose, bearing an open crown adorned with a trefoil pattern. This appearance was inspired from the recumbent figure of his grave, transferred from Saint-Denis to the museum of the Monuments Français after the 1789 Revolution (Lenoir 1800, t.1, 153-155, plate 19).

Signol portrays Dagobert with sharp, aristocratic features (Figure 1). The long hair is pulled away from the forehead, the nose is straight, and the mouth is thin and severe, whereas the cheekbones are hardly visible and flattened by the crude light. The bottom of the face is swallowed up by a beard and a well-brushed moustache, which reinforces the eyes' striking effect. Sunk into the shadow of the eyebrow arch, they pierce the viewer's gaze. His left hand lies on the pommel of the coronation sword, the crown is firmly placed on his head, the coat draped around his shoulders. Dagobert is presented as charismatic, overbearing, almost conceited. This stylistic bias is the same in all of Signol's portraits: very strongly shaped by a powerful chiaroscuro, the characters stand out against the plain background in shades of browns, golds and reds. The features are emphasized by strong lighting. In this dramatic effect, we see Signol's signature as a religious painter: bodies seem to emerge from the dark background, massive in their red coats adorned with stones, and their faces stand out, framed by long, dark hair against light-coloured skin.

This portrait of Dagobert appears, in its majesty, as the perfect opposite of Figure 2, of Clovis II. King from the age of four to twenty-two, the effective power was taken away from him by the comptrollers of the palace. The historian Henri Martin described him as a 'fornicator and seducer of women, devoted to greediness and drunkenness' (Martin 1844, 204), and suggested that Clovis

might have lost his mind after he profaned the grave of Saint Denis. Anquetil also mentioned some 'disturbances which made him suspected of mental illness' (Anquetil 1838, 185). Michelet noted the twelfth-century legend of the 'de-nerved of Jumièges', although the vagueness of his anecdote suggests that he expected his readers to be familiar with the episode. [7] The legend, discovered by the prior of the abbey of Jumièges in 1623 (Langlois 1623, 784), tells that Clovis II, eager to undertake a trip to the Holy Land, left the government in the hands of his wife Bathilda, as regent for his oldest son. The son, however, joined forces with his younger brother to rebel, pushed Bathilda aside, and organized an army against Clovis, who had to hastily return home. To punish them, their king and father condemned them to have their leg nerves burnt and set them adrift in a small boat. They were then found and taken to the abbey of Jumièges, where they became monks. This legend is unfounded, since Clovis died when he was twenty-two, and could not have seen his sons at an age to rebel against him. The legend received some success at the end of the nineteenth century, particularly from the striking representation by Evariste-Vital Luminais, from around 1880 (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Evariste-Vital Luminais, 'Les énervés de Jumièges', after 1880, oil on canvas, Rouen Museum of Fine Arts. © C. Lancien, C. Loisel/Réunion des Musées Métropolitains Rouen Normandie

Signol's portrait seems to focus on the juvenile, easily swayed and, perhaps, psychologically fragile side of Clovis II. The young man is represented in prayer, looking down at his hands clasped together on a velvet and gold cushion.

The sceptre lies beside him, as to signify that from his reign on, power shifted from the kings to the comptrollers. His hairstyle and crown look like Dagobert's: Signol ensured the visual continuity of his paintings. His mouth is thin, a little bitter, and the lowered eyelids drown in the arch shadow. With greater contrast than in Signol's other portraits, the face of the young man is covered with shadows, the skin is waxen and his expression is contrite and sad.

Thierry IV de Chelles[8] also presents the image of a pious man, but his eyes, this time, are looking up to the sky. In contrast with the portraits of the beginning of the series, showing the kings, like Clothar I or Childebert I, self-confident and settled in their thrones, the 'lazy kings' are mostly represented as sickly, elusive, or even distraught, as is Thierry III. One cannot avoid the impression that these men are not where they belong, which was indeed the case for some of them: Thierry IV de Chelles and Chilperic II were monks before they were taken out of their monastery to be put on the throne by comptrollers. Dagobert III is even represented stooping, with a dull look, and appears to move past the viewer like a shadow. For most of them, the eyes do not express anything, and they do not look at the viewer. Sometimes they address God or themselves, perfectly absent from their own bodies. Only one of the 'lazy kings', Clotaire III, painted by Monvoisin, has an expressive face, but his sidelong eyes and his strained mouth seem to show treacherousness and self-interest.

The 'networks of intentionalities'

In the first half of the nineteenth century, as noted above, two major perceptions of history painting coexisted: the first tried to carry on with the traditional conception of the prestigious 'grand genre', led by David especially. David based his work on Winckelmann's vision of ideal beauty, which he thought was achieved in classical Greek statuary. The latter summarized, in a striking formula when describing the sculpted group of the *Laocoon*, the qualities of Greek art: 'noble simplicity and calm grandeur' (Winckelmann 1755, 30). This formula became a true motto for Jacques-Louis David and his followers of the neoclassical school, at the turn of the nineteenth century. The ambition of these painters was to renew the tradition of the great historic genre, 'the antic tradition, […] the cult of the truth', through the representation of 'epic grandeur, [and] rigorous precision of style', Henri Delaborde explains in his essay on French painting (Delaborde 1864, 179). This vision of history painting was, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, confronted with a new conception (though the boundaries were not always very clear), expressed first by the Troubadour school in the 1810s, then developed by Paul Delaroche: the 'anecdotal' history genre, which borrowed both from the classical tradition of the history painting and to genre painting. In the history paintings, a much more familiar vision of historic figures progressively appeared, and a representation of a history which was no longer Greek or Roman but French. A painting like Paul

Delaroche's *Joan of Arc, sick, interrogated in prison by the cardinal of Winchester* (1824), showed a girl sure of her destiny and of heaven's protection, yet frightened, sick and lonely (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Paul Delaroche, 'Jeanne d'Arc, malade, interrogée dans sa prison par le cardinal de Winchester', oil on canvas, Rouen Museum of Fine Arts. © C. Lancien, C. Loisel/Réunion des Musées Métropolitains Rouen Normandie.

Delaroche's accurate style, his attention to historical detail and his talent in establishing dramatic tension, allows the viewer to feel for and identify with the characters, and to truly come into history. In the portraits at Versailles, these two conceptions of history painting coexist: the idea of representing through portraits a royal status requiring a 'calm grandeur' and high moral qualities, and the idea of showing the men behind the kings, with their flaws and weaknesses, making them men with whom the viewer can communicate.

Alfred Gell developed the theory of intentionality: within an artwork, several networks of intentionality meet and intertwine (Gell 1998). They all contribute to the understanding and the appreciation of the work. As anthropologist Maurice Bloch explains, in his attempt to comprehend and also to go deeper with Gell's theory, using as an example the creation of the bow of a canoe from the Trobriand Islands, the 'beam of intentionalities' exists as follows: 'the artist's intention to succeed in causing fear and stupefaction, the chief's intention to commission, realise and display it, as well as the crew's intention which both terrifies and seduces the trade partners, and finally the tree's intention, considered as a living force, have all supported the making of the wooden piece; that is in addition to the intentionality of the spirits summoned during the realisation, which, in every manner, are always present, struggling against the deadly intentions of the sea and against those who resist the trade' (Bloch 1999, 120).

In the case of the portraits of the Merovingian kings, we posit that that three main intentionalities are intertwined here. In the first place, the intentionality imposed by the State, that is to say the sponsor, takes priority. As we saw, the viewer is led to identify the represented characters as of royal status, thanks to an easily recognisable set of elements: the sceptre, the crown, the coronation sword, the crimson coat (except for one painting, in which the coat is blue, which was to become the royal colour under Philippe-Auguste) (Pastoureau and Simonnet 2005, 21). However, those accessories are also important temporal indicators. Because of their generic nomination (crown, sword, etc) and their multiple presence in the paintings, they emphasise the status of the French monarchy. However, because of their specific form, the metal they are made of, their ornamentation, they bring to mind the particular period of the Franks and of Merovingian dynasty. These portraits work as tangible traces, 'testimonies' of the past, even if they were painted long afterwards. They become history paintings, depicting historical events. This first intentionality contributes to create a feeling of distance between the subjects of the painting (the French kings) and the viewer. The sponsor seeks to arouse respect along with a feeling of national membership, and to encourage reflection by the viewer.

The second intentionality comes from the artists, in the imaginative work they provide. In *Le portrait du roi*, Louis Marin states that the portrait endeavours to 'pretend that the other, the absent one, is here and now the same, not as

a presence but as an effect of presence' (Marin 1981, 9). The painters have indeed tried to produce an 'effect of presence' through these portraits, and to give some kind of reality to men whose customs and ways of thinking were so far away from the nineteenth-century reality, that it was uneasy to conceive they might actually have, some day, existed, breathed, and felt. It certainly takes no less than a Chateaubriand or a Michelet to succeed, as they did themselves, in experiencing the 'feeling of history' and this idea of the physical existence of men appearing to be rather fantasies or fairy-tale characters than real historical figures (see Nora 2006). These authors, besides, wrote a history close to the genre of the historical novel. Chateaubriand observes this balance of power: 'Those lively paintings will make harder and harder the task of the historian […] In our time the true History will have its fictional history, which will make it disappear into its brightness, or will follow it like its shadow' (Chateaubriand 1838, VIII). From this perspective, the portraits at Versailles are related to the historical novel: the historical sources the artists draw from to create their portraits brings authenticity, but their imagination complements them to 'give life' to the kings. The characters therefore all have a unique appearance, their own way of behaving, of looking at or avoiding the viewer, showing a personality, or at least an intention of personality. The artist's double intentionality lies in the desire to evoke a past time as well as giving the characters a depth, allowing the viewer to identify with them and better understand what is given him to see. Maurice Bloch writes that 'every cognitive psychologist agrees to recognise the capacity to ascribe to other individuals beliefs and desires, which allow us to understand them and the messages they wish to pass on us, whether these messages are linguistic or not, as one of the most essential features, if not the most fundamental feature of human behaviour' (Bloch 1999, 121-122). It is indeed the very process used by the artists, which guaranties the efficiency of the portraits. A double identity therefore appears. On one hand the royal identity of the sovereign rules over his people almost as a collective identity, a public figure of a king belonging to his subjects. On the other hand, an individual and personal identity allows us to see the man behind the king.

Finally, a third intentionality results from the first two: the portraits of the Merovingian kings literally attempt to give substance, to embody the idea of a French nation with a prestigious past as a legacy, in which the Merovingian kings stand as ancestors of the monarchy and nation. We may add that, if both intentionalities of the State and of the artists are implemented here, so is that of the Versailles museum: the function and the very intentionality which led to the museum's creation influence the reading of all the exhibited paintings.

In the light of what we just saw, we might therefore think, at first, that these portraits do not quite answer the State's commission, whose aim was to edify the people with heroic examples. Thus, it seems there is a confrontation and therefore a reduction of the message between the terms of the State's commission and the reality of these portraits. However, it appears to us that they actually

favour the message of the State by showing both the prestige and flaws of the first kings. The series, as we mentioned, is part of a broader ensemble of French kings' portraits, and has to be read as such. The purpose of the Merovingian portraits is to show a time when the strength of the French mind had not yet manifested. This representation thus enhances the image of successive kings, and especially those who were very popular during the nineteenth century: Charlemagne, Saint Louis, Henri IV and Louis XIV. Each one symbolised one phase of the royalty (and of the nation, so to speak, according to the logic of the Versailles museum), becoming more refined and cultivated, more French, in short, if we believe the nineteenth-century texts asserting that French culture was partly founded on these qualities (Haskell 1976; Zerner and Rosen 1984).

History manifested itself in these portraits through a complex relationship with the nineteenth century. Although the portraits evoked lives, they remained limited, and could not perfectly nor completely describe the facts, the habits and the 'spirit of ancient times', to recall a nineteenth-century phrase. This very impossibility, however, left room for imagination and inventiveness in order to 'fill the blanks'. What history rendered of the past, readers or viewers wanted to be able to take hold of it, to make it their own, to identify themselves with it, by removing, thanks to imagination, the distance between centuries and men. Michelet expressed this dilemma when he confessed in his famous phrase: 'more complicated, more alarming, was my historical problem raised as a resurrection of life in its entirety, not on its surface, but deep inside its organism' (Michelet 1880, IV). This desire for a complete restitution of history, in facts and 'feeling', was the impossible wish of romantic and liberal historians. They indeed attempted to combine both approaches of factual and 'living' history, to make it familiar to the reader by the artifice of literary writing and the impact of anecdote. The portraits of the Merovingian kings bear the mark of these attempts at writing a sociological history.

The question asked at the beginning of this article was as follows: how do these portraits testify of a state of mind of 1840s French society, questioning its own roots and heritage, and through it, its own identity? Through the consideration of the Merovingian period, historical, political and moral conceptions were expressed. The vision of Merovingian times, with its violence, chaos and licentiousness, comforted the nineteenth-century French, as they considered the supposedly more civilized characteristics of their own time. On the other hand, this feeling of comfort was probably balanced by a feeling of doubt and uneasiness with the very normality of their society. The authors of the study *La fabrique du Moyen Age au XIXᵉ siècle* note that in the nineteenth century, 'time as a historical moment was put aside', meaning the Middle Ages as a historical object became subject to narcissistic appropriation: 'the Middle Ages are no longer a mirror in which man seeks to recognize the old features of his face, and is rather a screen on which he plays and makes a projection of his fantasies and imagi-

nation, which are inspired by his repugnance of the present and of reality' (Bernard-Griffiths et al 2006, 19). This observation is only partly true concerning the portraits of the Merovingian kings. Their faces are characterized with a uniqueness imagined by the artists, but the (French) viewer can find their own features in them, since, if they are French, they might feel (or, through these portraits, are told to feel) they are heir to these kings, even as a commoner. They are shown as a path through the viewer's own identity. On the other side, these portraits cause a questioning of the self, and open an exit from the self through dreaming and fantasy. In this sense, they encourage viewers to develop an almost metaphysical questioning of their own identity and their desire to escape from this identity. These portraits allow the viewers to perform a reflexive loop, a pendulum swing, to centralize and decentralise themselves, between the necessity to be anchored, to catch what makes them individuals and members of a nation, of a society and of a given time, and the need to get away from that anchorage.

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1   'Rois fainéants' can be literally translated as 'lazy kings', and refers to several Merovingian
    kings from Thierry III (673-c. 679) to Childéric III (743-751). All translations from French
    are by the present author.

2   His *Histoire de France* was republished thirty-nine times between 1805 and 1880, each time
    extended with an appendix and often illustrated.

3   Anquetil, in his 1805 edition of the *Histoire de France* uses 'the four first French kings' to
    designate the predecessors of Clovis (243). Gabriel Peignot uses 'kings of the French' to
    denote all chiefs and monarchs from the Franks to the Restoration (1815, XXVIIJ), as does
    Laure de Saint-Ouen in her 1827 pedagogical work intended for primary schools (5).

4   The drawing is preserved by the Bodleian Library of the University of Oxford, alongside
    with other original drawings of gravestones and epitaphs, but the major part of the collection
    is preserved by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and digitized in its catalogue;
    http://catalogue.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb405561394. This collection was frequently consulted
    by the nineteenth-century painters.

5   Alexandre Lenoir noted that the style and craftsmanship of the statue suggests that it was
    executed after Clovis' death, but he did not give it a more precise date (Lenoir 1798, 141-
    42).

6   Austrasia, Burgundy and Neustria constituted the three parts of the Frankish realms.

7   The original name of this episode is 'les énervés de Jumièges', translated here by 'de-
    nerved', literally 'without nerves'. 'The symbol of this race [the lazy kings] are the *de-
    nerved* of Jumièges' (Michelet 1835, 281). Michelet makes this episode the symbol of Mer-
    ovingian decadence, blinded by the pleasures offered by the Roman world they had con-
    quered.

8   Thierry IV of Chelles is incorrectly called Thierry II in the painting by Signol and in Charles
    Gavard's book. Thierry IV de Chelles did rule from 721 to 737, and grew up in the abbaye
    de Chelles.

Masculine crusaders, effeminate Greeks, and the female historian: Relations of power in Sir Walter Scott's *Count Robert of Paris*

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Abstract: Gender employed as a methodological lens in the analysis of historical fiction can help to reveal implicit or explicit evaluative statements. It is deployed here to examine hierarchies in the military, political and cultural context of the encounter between 'virile' Westerners and 'effeminate' Greeks in Sir Walter Scott's last novel, Count Robert of Paris *(1831), which is set in Constantinople at the start of the First Crusade (1096-7). Scott's depiction of Westerners and Orientalized Greeks is set against the geopolitical concerns of the author's own time. The gendered perspective through which Scott constructs relationships in* Count Robert *makes it clear that the ancestors of modern Britain and France must control the East, represented here by the Byzantine Greeks. On the other hand, Scott's ambivalent and fluctuating portrayal of the twelfth-century historiographer Anna Comnena as a fictional character in the novel reveals his own uncertain stance between rejection and admiration of the female historian, as well as a more complex approach to gender dynamics in times of change.*

Introduction

Sir Walter Scott's *Count Robert of Paris*, his penultimate novel and the last to be published in his lifetime, is not representative. Set in Constantinople at the outset of the First Crusade (1096), the novel deals with the period of the Eastern Roman Empire, better known as the Byzantine Empire. The novel, a product of Scott's grinding effort to get himself out of debt and fulfil his obligations to his creditors after his bankruptcy in 1826, met with moderate success when it was first published in 1831. It sold well, but it was not received enthusiastically by the critics. The *Edinburgh Literary Journal* remarks '[it] must rank among the least successful of Sir Walter's works' although it 'bear[s] traces of his genius' (The Walter Scott Digital Archive, 2011).

Count Robert is today one of Scott's least known and studied works. It is not an easy read. The historical background is relatively obscure. Scott's editorial team, son-in-law John Gibson Lockhart, publisher Robert Cadell, and printer James Ballantyne, were critical of the novel from the start, their objections 'initiating an acrimonious exchange of missives' with the author (Alexander 2006, 386). Cadell found the Greek names of the characters odd and difficult (Alexander 2006, 386); all three were unanimous in their condemnation of the episode in which two females fight in single combat and one of them is 'enceinte', as Cadell put it delicately (Alexander 2006, 397). The sprawling plot and weak structure drove Scott himself to despair. Eventually Lockhart made substantial changes to Scott's text. For over a century and a half Lockhart's heavily edited version was the published version. The 'original' novel was only published for the first time in 2006, in the definitive Edinburgh University Press re-edition of Scott's works.

Count Robert of Paris was inspired by an episode narrated in *The Alexiad,* the twelfth-century historiographical work by Anna Comnena,[1] daughter of the Greek emperor Alexius I Comnenus, who played a crucial part in initiating the First Crusade with his plea to Pope Urban II for forces that would aid him in his wars against the Seljuk Turks (Frankopan 2012). This episode, which Scott first encountered in Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776) and used in his 'Essay on Chivalry' for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Alexander 2006, 381), took place in the late winter of 1096 or spring of 1097, when the three principal contingents of the First Crusade had converged on Constantinople, their rendezvous before venturing out to Asia and the Holy Land. In Anna Comnena's account, during a meeting that Alexius held in the palace of Blachernai with the leaders of the Crusade, a French-Norman knight sat on the emperor's throne, disregarding palace etiquette. He was immediately reprimanded by Baldwin of Boulogne, the future first King of Jerusalem. Alexius, however, was not angry; he asked the man who he was and where he came from. The Crusader replied that he came from France, from a castle near the Chapel of the Virgin of the Broken Lance, and spent his days waiting there for passing knights whom he could call out to single combat, but no one had come so far. Alexius then told the quarrelsome man that he would soon have plenty of opportunities for fighting against the Turks, and offered him sensible advice to 'stay in the middle, and avoid being either in the vanguard or in the rear' (Komnene 1148, 292). That man was Count Robert of Paris, whose name Scott used for his novel, although he is not the protagonist. Around this episode Scott builds a convoluted plot with no clear structure or strong narrative arc. Scott's familiar tropes from the Gothic novel and the chivalric romance are somewhat stale; the anchoring of the novel within its historical setting, with many explicit references and quotations from the two historiographical works which inspired it, encumber the story, acting like an inertial force on the narrative and rendering the text rambling and tedious.

In spite of its weaknesses, *Count Robert* is a fascinating novel. In his representation of the first massive historical encounter between Greeks and Western Europeans during the First Crusade, Scott depicts effeminate Greeks and virile Crusaders from the West. By focusing on traits of sexualised identities, the novel makes evaluative statements, implicit or explicit, about the hierarchical relationship between the East and the West. Scott, a great admirer of Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776), adheres to Gibbon's derogatory portrayal of the Eastern Roman Empire, presenting Byzantium as a locus of deception, decadence, and moral degeneration. By representing the Greek characters as weak, effeminate, and passive, or given to machinations and intrigues, and the Western characters as honourable, brave, and honest, Scott follows Gibbon's view of the 'Lower Empire' as a decadent Rome, in which the manly, vigorous virtues of old Rome had been abandoned to be replaced by Oriental despotism, superstition and effeminacy, until the barbarian but vigorous West took over the old empire and gave it new life through Charlemagne, some of whose descendants are among the characters in *Count Robert*. Written at a time of great Western colonial expansion to the East, mainly British and French, the novel implies that the West, here represented by the eponymous hero, the French-Norman Robert of Paris, and the true protagonist of the novel, the Anglo-Saxon Varangian Hereward, must dominate the decaying Byzantine Empire, which Scott often conflates with the Ottoman Empire which succeeded it. In the depiction of Western characters there are various degrees of positive representation, but the Greeks (also called Orientals) are almost all negatively depicted, with one exception: the historian princess Anna Comnena. In her ambivalent and sometimes contradictory portrayal we may perceive, I will argue, Scott's own ambivalence towards the gendered roles prevalent in his day, as well as a reluctant admiration for the female historiographer.

Scott builds the plot around the young protagonist, Hereward, who is a Varangian guard in the service of Alexius Comnenus. Hereward is torn between loyalty to the emperor and chivalric duty towards the Crusaders, with whom he has much more in common than with the Greeks he serves (i.e. his superior officer Achilles Tatius and Emperor Alexius), in spite of the hatred and desire for revenge that he feels for the Normans as an Anglo-Saxon exile. Owing to his courage, strength, and manly beauty, he soon becomes the centre of a number of plots and subplots which involve Alexius, his daughter Princess Anna, her foppish husband Nicephorus Briennius, Count Robert of Paris and his pugnacious wife Countess Brenhilda, a Western former mercenary now a prisoner in the dungeons of Alexius, Italian-Norman Crusaders, and an assortment of Greek characters, most notably a sorcerer-philosopher and an army officer plotting against the emperor. There are even representatives of the 'monstrous races' of ancient and medieval accounts, evoked in the characters of the black slave Diogenes, the Scythian mercenary Toxartes, and Sylvan the orang-utang. According to Ian Duncan, '*Count Robert of Paris* offers fantastic glimpses of a

multiplicity of human developmental forms and paths' (Duncan 2012, 138) in an imaginary Constantinople where 'the boundaries between culture and race, race and species, and human and non-human species shift and blur' (Duncan 2012, 139). If this novel is an exploration of 'universal human nature' (Duncan 2012, 138) in the depiction of its various manifestations and evolutions, as Duncan claims, it is also a novel that explores power in gendered manifestations. These have concrete political implications, by which ultimately the shifting boundaries will settle more or less to the advantage of one 'culture and race' at the expense of the other(s). I argue this hypothesis by focusing on the relationship and dynamics developed between Greeks and Westerners, whose encounters in the novel are framed within a gendered discourse signalling tension, potential violence and ultimately a struggle for domination. In this struggle, each side uses different means and adheres to different codes: the Westerners try to dominate the Greeks with their strength, honour and prowess in war, and the Greeks use deception and cunning to pre-empt Western aggression, which they fear above all else. Hereward is positioned between Count Robert and Alexius, bound by honour to the first and by obligation to the second, and the plot directs him to find a way to balance and if possible bring together those two opposing sides, in true Lukácsian fashion (Lukács 1989, 36). However, he clearly leans towards the Crusaders' cause, even though he will fight in single combat against Count Robert in support of Alexius. The intricacies of these shifting alliances echo the complexities of international politics on the Eastern Question and the involvement of Britain and France in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire in the early nineteenth century, particularly in the matter of Greek independence (1821-1830) which saw these two Great Powers sometimes supporting and sometimes turning against one another or the Ottomans. The very presence of Westerners of various provenances in Constantinople at the time of the First Crusade evokes eighteenth and nineteenth century realities in the Ottoman empire where, 'as [its] decline became manifest and the rivalry over its anticipated remains became intense with France, Russia and England, the Greek lands began to swarm with military, diplomatic and even commercial agents' (Woodhouse 1969, 17).

Brian Hamnett sees *Count Robert* as another contribution to a debate over relationships between East and West, to which Scott returns after *The Talisman* (1825). However, the East of Count Robert is not the East of the Muslim world, but rather a liminal place occupied by the Greeks, 'squeezed between the Franks – the "barbarians" – on the one side, and the Muslims – the "infidels" – on the other' (Hamnett 2011, 97). This East has all the negative connotations of the 'despotic' Orient and none of the redeeming features of courage, gallantry and wisdom that Scott depicted in the heroic portrait of Saladin in *The Talisman,* his 'one unreservedly romantic hero' (Hamnett 2011, 97, 73n). Disparaging views of the Greeks, prominent in the late eleventh- and early twelfth-century Chron-

icles of the First Crusade, were adopted by Torquato Tasso (whom Scott admired greatly: see Brand 1972; Irwin 2014) in his First Crusade epic *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1581), and continued in later centuries, when Western European travellers began to visit Greece, which, 'placed in a twilight zone illuminated neither by the radiance of the West nor by the exotic glow of the East' (Olga Augustinos in Todorova 2009: 78, 67n) was frankly disappointing. Gibbon's negative assessment of the medieval Greek world is well-known and so is his influence on Scott. This position is at the heart of Scott's representation of Greek characters. The one notable exception is Anna Comnena, whose ambivalent portrayal reveals Scott's benign but ultimately traditionalist stance towards women, as well as his own anxieties about a changing world, in which conventional gender categories were not adequate to render the complexities of reality.

Masculine Westerners, effeminate Greeks, and the dialectics of sexual domination

Joan Wallach Scott has proposed using gender as a way 'to decode meaning and to understand the complex connections among various forms of human interaction' as well as to offer insights into 'the specific ways in which politics constructs gender and gender constructs politics' (Wallach Scott 1999, 46). It is thus significant that the relationship between the Westerners and Greeks in *Count Robert* is presented as a struggle for domination, framed in gendered terms, which underpin specific political agendas. This has important implications for the terms in which these two worlds meet, since it makes the possibility of mutual recognition or respect problematic. The two parties do not come together as equals but are presented as threatening and threatened respectively; their gendered encounter results in their relationship adopting the character of sexual domination. According to psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin, sexual domination is a dialectic relationship of control, in which assertion of the self and respect for the Other are mutually exclusive. Domination implies annihilation of the other: 'if I completely control the other, then the other ceases to exist, and if the other completely controls me, then I cease to exist' (Benjamin 1984, 295). Using Hegel's discussion of master-slave relationship, Benjamin sees domination and control as a form of self-identification posited in polemical or confrontational terms. The struggle for domination becomes by definition a struggle for existence. Recognition of the other is impossible, for it is perceived as a threat to one's own sense of self (Benjamin 1984, 293); identity can only be constituted through the achievement of power over the other. Thus the dominator asserts his power over the Other by aggression, disparagement, and scorn (Benjamin 1984, 299). In *Count Robert* the erotics of sexual domination are pervasive in the perception and depiction of the encounters not only between characters but also between the different worlds and cultures they represent. The tensions and

conflicts between East and West cannot be resolved by mutual acceptance and recognition but by the nexus of domination / subjugation.

The terms of gendered discourse are set in the reader's first encounter with Hereward. Scott makes a point of emphasising his manliness in his introductory description:

> His beauty […] though he was really a handsome young man in features and in person, *was not liable to the charge of effeminacy*. From this it was rescued, both by his *size*, and by the *confident and self-possessed air* with which the youth seemed to regard the wonders around him, not indicating the stupid and helpless gaze of a mind equally inexperienced and incapable of receiving instruction, but expressing the *bold intellect* which at once understands the information which it receives, and commands the spirit to toil in search of the meaning of that which it has not comprehended, or may fear it has misinterpreted. (Scott 1831, 10; emphasis added)

Scott signals clearly Hereward's masculine attributes either explicitly (he is not effeminate) or implicitly with physical, moral, and mental traits that befit a man according to nineteenth-century gender conventions: size, confidence, self-possession, intellectual boldness. Ina Ferris has shown how these attributes (especially self-possession) gained particular importance in Scott's time, when masculinity was being redefined, moving away from violence and towards a more civilised restraint, albeit still active and vigorous (Ferris 1999, 92). Hereward represents this new ideal of masculinity, positioned against both Count Robert, who represents the outdated order of unrestrained violence, and the Greek characters, who are almost effeminate in their cowardice and avoidance of armed conflict at all costs. In this sense, Hereward's character attests to Georg Lukács (Lukács 1989, 49) understanding of Scott's historical fiction as the place where transformations of history become transformations of popular life. Hereward is not only a model of Aristotelian perfection, the mean between deficiency and excess, but also the man who stands neither too low nor too high in the social order and can therefore, as Lukács puts it, 'bring the extremes, whose struggle fills the novel, into contact with one another' (Lukács 1989, 36).

Although Hereward's natural gifts, his physical appearance and his intellectual capabilities are all virile, the world in which he lives and acts tries to force him to adopt effeminate luxury, typical of the 'Orient'. As a member of the emperor's guard, Hereward is required to wear a 'rich, or rather gaudy costume' which 'exhibited a singular mixture of *splendour and effeminacy*' (Scott 1831, 12; emphasis added). In this splendid, effeminate costume Hereward, who is compared to 'youthful Hercules' by an admiring Greek artist (Scott 1831, 15), rather evokes the image of an effeminate Hercules, according to the myth in which Hercules, dressed as a woman, served in the court of an Oriental queen. A tense atmosphere of sexual ambivalence is thus created which foreshadows

Hereward and Anna Comnena's encounter in her palace apartments, where Hereward will be the only real man among the females of the imperial family, the priests, the courtiers, and even the emperor, who is presented, contrary to historical fact, as a non-fighting ruler. As an imperial guard, Hereward must carry arms, but the Greek sword is not impressive: 'A light crooked sword, or scimitar, sheathed in a scabbard of gold and ivory, hung by [his] left side […] the ornamental hilt of which appeared much too small for the large-jointed hand of the young Hercules who was thus gaily attired' (Scott 1831, 11). The reference to scimitar is particularly striking, as scimitars were Ottoman and not Byzantine; this is one of many instances in which Scott orientalises the medieval Greek empire. This orientalised toy-sword is not the only weapon on Hereward's person: he carries his own Anglo-Saxon battle-axe, 'a weapon which seemed actually adapted to the young barbarian's size, and unfit to be used by a man of less formidable limbs and sinews than his own' (Scott 1831, 11). A potent phallic symbol described in covert sexual terms ('firm staff', 'ponderous size'), the battle-axe signals masculinity and reveals Hereward's true nature beneath the frivolous, effeminate regalia he is obliged to wear. It also sets him apart from the native Greeks who, having 'the mark of civilised people […] never bore weapons during the time of peace' (Scott 1831, 11). Lacking this symbolic penis, the Greeks are in effect symbolically castrated. The only individual endowed with masculinity at this moment in the novel is the Westerner, whom the native Greeks view 'with some evident show of fear as well as dislike' (Scott 1831, 11). The fear of the Greek characters, from passers-by in the street to the emperor himself, when facing Westerners suggests Anna Comnena's and her father's firm belief, expressed often in *The Alexiad*, that the Crusaders' real aim was not the liberation of the Holy Land, but the conquest of the Byzantine Empire and all its wealth. History, of course, proved that Alexius and Anna's fears were justified: during the Fourth Crusade in 1204, Constantinople indeed became the target and fell to the Crusaders, who installed a short-lived Latinate kingdom there.

Scott's emphatic focus on Hereward's masculinity and the loving description of this 'ponderously sized' phallic weapon, as well as the contrast between his effeminate clothes and his 'formidable limbs and sinews' imply that Hereward's subaltern position to the Greek emperor is only nominal. The Greeks cannot dominate and tame him with their decadent culture; their cultural artifices are nothing to Hereward's true manly nature, and their weak and small swords (size matters very much in this case) are no match for his enormous hands and battle-axe. With the emphasis on Hereward's weapons, the gendered discourse acquires overtones of sexualised threats of violence. When Hereward hears a Greek slander the Varangians, he expresses his intention to '[cram] the epithet down the speaker's throat with the spike of my battle-axe'. Hereward justifies his violent intention, which implies an act of sexual humiliation, as the only way in which he can preserve his manhood after the insult: 'The lie is to a

man the same as a blow, and a blow degrades him into a slave and a beast of burden, if endured without retaliation' (Scott 2006, 27). For Hereward, the use of physical violence against a slanderer, who is not provoking him with physical violence, is seen to be necessary for his survival as a man of honour. Not using violence would degrade and annihilate him, since in his view his freedom and his very humanity are at stake.

The phallic battle-axe, the signifier which separates the masculine Anglo-Saxon from the feminised Greeks, is a symbolic penis, the 'symbolisation of male mastery' (Benjamin 1984, 299); it is what separates Hereward from the condition of the slave. The weapon-bearing man is the true master in a feminized society. Alexius recognises Hereward's superiority, is aware of the danger, and he tries not to show his fear, on several occasions, of his nominal subaltern. In Benjamin's words, '[t]he penis symbolises the fact that, however interdependent the master and slave become, the master will always maintain the boundary – the rigidity, antagonism, and polarization of their respective parts' (Benjamin 1984, 300). The hierarchical superiority of Hereward, the battle-axe-bearing Westerner, over the unarmed, 'castrated' Greeks of the emperor's court is thus established.

Only in the presence of other Westerners, male or female, is Hereward among equals or with his true superiors, because their valour, honesty and lack of sophisticated over-complication match his own. The mark of equality is the single combat: the locus of the true encounter in the chivalric code, in which only equals in rank can participate. Count Robert initially rejects Hereward's challenge to single combat, since the young man is not his social equal. But later, when Count Robert challenges Nicephorus Briennius, who is under arrest in the palace for conspiring against his father-in-law and is thus unable to fight, he will accept Hereward as an opponent, in spite of Prince Tancred's protestation that the lists 'were only open to knights and nobles'. Hereward the Varangian is, ironically, the only *man* from the Greek side (as the emperor's guard) to accept Count Robert's challenge, and thus save 'the honour of Nicephorus Briennius, and the credit of the empire' (Scott 2006, 345).

This complex of oppositions is echoed in Anna Comnena. She is the only Greek character who can be matched with Westerners: she is the only Greek in the novel to fight in single combat, facing Countess Brenhilda in the lists in the 'damning' episode which so horrified Scott's editorial team,[2] and she even threatens Hereward's masculinity itself. In their first encounter Hereward is overcome by the power of Anna's narrative. The masculinised balance of power between East and West is reversed in their first encounter, albeit temporarily.

Hereward and Anna Comnena:
The power of the Female Historiographer

The historical Anna Comnena (b. 1083, d. 1154?), princess, historiographer, scholar, intellectual and patron of intellectuals in the Comnenean era (described also as the Comnenean Renaissance of the twelfth century), seems to have fascinated Scott (see Kolovou 2016). He even considered naming the novel *Anna Comnena* instead of *Count Robert of Paris*, as he wrote in a letter to Cadell (Alexander 2006, 387). Gibbon, Scott's main source, cited Anna Comnena's work in *Decline and Fall*, but although he praised her judgment and discernment, his overall assessment of her historiography was scathing and arguably misogynistic: 'Yet, instead of the simplicity of style and narrative which wins our belief, an elaborate affectation of rhetoric and science betrays, in every page, the vanity of a female author' (Gibbon 1776, 263). Scott's portrayal of Anna in his novel initially follows Gibbon's assessment, presenting Anna as a vain and affected woman with literary pretensions. This portrayal, however, is inconsistent throughout the novel. Scott's ambivalence towards the historical character is made manifest in his various and conflicting depictions of Anna as literary woman, damsel-in-distress, honest wife, would-be temptress and even reluctant female warrior. Although Anna's writing is today acknowledged to be powerful, depictions of the female author as a figure of vanity and folly and as an object of ridicule were widespread in Scott's own time (see for example Gouma-Peterson 2000, ix; Ljubarski 2000, 168-85; Treadgold 2013, 373-74, 385). Gibbon's disparaging comment echoes a nineteenth-century consensus on the vanity of female writers. Francis Jeffrey, the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, made a remark in 1803 that indicates this: 'impatience of honest industry, that presumptuous vanity, and precarious principle, that have […] drawn so many females from their plain work and their embroidery, to delight the public with their beauty in the streets, and their novels in the circulating library' (Ferris 1991, 29). Early nineteenth-century women authors were 'mocked and ruled out of order' if they ventured into male territory, such as history (Ferris 1991, 52), law, and the classics (Ferris 1991, 85-6). Literary salons and the social activities of literary women, called 'bluestockings' since the time of Mrs Thrale, were another favourite target. As Pam Perkins in her exploration of Scottish women writers notes, 'by the end of the eighteenth century, the intellectual sociability of the bluestockings was a matter for satire and criticism while the word itself was becoming a form of shorthand for all the supposedly more unattractive qualities of literary women' (Perkins 2010, 37).

Although Scott himself was known to support and encourage female writers, it should be noted that this approval of female authorship seems to be limited to women who engage in fiction themed around love, family, relationships, the domestic and the social space which was acceptable for women to inhabit. Above all they should be pleasant in a feminine way. Scott's comment in his journal about the Scottish novelist Susan Ferrier (1782-1854) shows what he

valued, and did not, in a female author: 'This gifted personage, besides having great talents, has conversation the least exigeante of any author, female least, who I have ever seen among the long list I have encountered, - simple, full of humour, and exceedingly read at repartee; and all this without the least affectation of the blue stocking' (Monnickendam 2013, 67). The 'affectation of the blue stocking' is a negative trait which Scott along with other writers of his era, including many women, deplores in a woman writer. Affectation and pretentiousness are what Scott also sees in Anna Comnena: he makes a point of repeating, following Gibbon, that 'vainglory' was the 'ruling principle' of her writing and the motive 'which induced her to affect the character of a historian' (Scott 1831, 360).

In her first appearance in the novel Anna Comnena is presented as an affected bluestocking who makes her writing something of a public performance (to a captive audience of her parents and their courtiers), in order to gratify her vanity. Her literary salon, 'the Temple of the Muses' as it is rather mockingly called by Scott, is a place of unmitigated boredom: her father the emperor is usually half-asleep during her recitations, and the courtiers only put up with it out of necessity. But the greatest victim of Anna's inflated sense of self-worth as a princess and female intellectual is her husband, Nicephorus Briennius, whose rightful place of superiority in the household as a man is usurped by his wife's pretensions. This is made manifest in the symbolic positioning of their seats in the salon. Anna sits on an elevated place on a dais, a table before her 'loaded with books, plants, herbs, and drawings' displaying her interests and accomplishments. On the same dais another chair, just like hers 'in size and convenience' but placed lower, is her husband's seat. 'To atone for the lowly fashion of the seat of Nicephorus Briennius, it was placed as near to his princess as it could possibly be edged by the ushers, so that she might not lose one look of her handsome spouse, nor he the least particle of wisdom which might drop from the lips of his erudite consort' (Scott 1831, 37). This is an inversion of conventional gender roles: Anna sits in a higher position than her husband, and has the traditionally male attributes of erudition and wisdom, while Nicephorus is the 'handsome spouse' who is supposed to be hanging on her lips. But Anna's intellectual superiority is presented as detrimental to domestic happiness:

> [Briennius] was said to entertain or affect the greatest respect for his wife's erudition, though the courtiers were of the opinion he would have liked to absent himself from her evening parties more frequently than was particularly agreeable to the Princess Anna and her imperial parents. This was partly explained by the private tattle of the court, which averred that the Princess Anna Comnena had been more beautiful when she was less learned; and that, though still a fine woman, she had somewhat lost the charms of her person, as she became enriched in her mind. (Scott 1831, 37)

Scott distances his narrative voice from this judgement somewhat by attributing it to gossiping courtiers, yet the idea that a learned woman either loses something of her 'feminine charms' as she gains in knowledge, or that she has devoted herself to learning in the first place because she lacks feminine charms altogether, was quite widespread in Scott's world. The unflattering comments of the courtiers echo Charlotte Smith's portrait of the fictional bluestocking Mrs Manby, whose literary pretensions were the result of 'a vain and deluded pursuit of the sort of admiration she fails to win through any more conventionally feminine means' (Perkins 2010, 38). Although Anna is a beautiful woman, Scott informs us, she is getting on in years and is now twenty-seven years old. In historical fact, Anna Comnena was only thirteen at the time of the First Crusade, and began to write her history in her old age; but neither the girl nor the old woman could be of any use in Scott's historical romance. By sexualising the character of the historian and discussing her in gendered terms, Scott undermines the power of Anna Comnena's intellect, making her the object of vicious gossip because of it.

Soon after Hereward is introduced to the reader, he is summoned to the presence of the emperor at a gathering in the palace, where Anna Comnena entertains (or bores, Scott hints) the imperial court with readings from her work. As Hereward is led inside the labyrinthine palace, he encounters 'another species of inhabitants', the 'withered and deformed beings' who fascinate and horrify in Western accounts of the Orient, the court eunuchs. They are busy in various occupations 'of profound silence' (Scott 1831, 34), and function as a disturbing reminder of what it means to be castrated, foreshadowing the danger Hereward will face in the palace. On entering the part of the palace where Anna's apartments are located, Hereward is asked to relinquish his battle-axe before entering. He refuses, as he will not acquiesce to this symbolic castration, which the rules of an over-civilized, effeminate world and, by inference, the intelligent woman who resides within, want to impose on him. His commanding officer exhorts him to behave properly: 'remember thou dash [the battle-axe] not about according to thy custom, nor bellow, nor shout, nor cry as in a battle-field' (Scott 1831, 36). In other words, Hereward is required to tame his barbarian masculinity and subject it to the rules of this feminised environment. The emphasis on the gendered differences between the sophisticated Greek palace and the young Westerner of untamed virility help to set the scene for the meeting in terms of antithesis and confrontation, and also erotic tension.

When Hereward enters Anna's apartment through the folding doors it is difficult to resist reading this in Freudian terms of sexual penetration, particularly since the same description of the folding doors 'yielding' is used again when Anna's husband enters the room later (Scott 1831, 61). Anna is about to begin a reading. The passage she has chosen gives an account of the (fictional) battle of Laodicea, in which Hereward and the Varangian guard were active participants, and Anna asks Hereward 'to correct any mistake or misapprehension'

(Scott 1831, 45) in the narrative, which he does. Anna's ability to write well about warfare has elicited much praise by modern scholars, as well as doubts that she could have written those passages herself (see Macrides 2000, 63-81). Scott does not seem to harbour such doubts, as in his pastiche of Anna's history he places the princess near the action on the battlefield, where she and her mother accompany her father on his military campaign. Undoubtedly Scott took Anna at her own word: when discussing her sources, Anna clearly states that '[m]ost of the time, moreover, we were ourselves present, for we accompanied my father and mother. My life by no means revolved round the home; we did not live a pampered existence' (Komnene 1148, 421). By showing Anna to be an eye-witness to the events she describes, Scott offers an explanation of her ability to write so vividly on military affairs, which is subtle praise for her writing skills.

Hereward's response to Anna's request, 'boldly and bluntly delivered' (Scott 1831, 45), impresses everyone present and makes one of the courtiers whisper to another '"The northern battle-axe lacks neither point nor edge"'(Scott 1831, 45): in this instance, the battle-axe, sign of Hereward's masculinity, is endowed with intellectual and moral power as well. The battle-axe is not used metonymically for the penis here, but for the tongue, which will not be afraid to speak the truth. A real man is in possession of both a penis and a tongue, as opposed to the eunuchs whom Hereward encountered earlier, who had been stripped of both their manhood and their speech. Anna realises that she has 'invoked the opinion of a severe judge', but also 'that his respect was of a character more real, and his applause, should she gain it, would prove more truly flattering, than the gilded assent of the whole Grecian audience' (Scott 1831, 46). In this way, although Anna is on her own territory, authority derives from Hereward, as he holds the power of verifying or rejecting Anna's historical account. At the same time, Scott hints at Anna's sexual attraction to Hereward:

> She gazed with some surprise and attention on Hereward, already described as a very handsome young man, and felt the natural desire to please, which is easily created in the mind towards a fine person of the other sex. His attitude was easy and bold, but neither clownish nor uncourtly. His title of a barbarian, placed him at once free from the forms of civilized life, and the rules of artificial politeness […] In short, the Princess Anna Comnena, high in rank as she was, […] felt herself, nevertheless, […] more anxious to obtain the approbation of this rude soldier, than that of all the rest of the courteous audience. […] she had now a judge of a new character, whose applause, if given, must have something in it intrinsically real, since it could only be obtained by affecting his head or his heart. (Scott 1831, 46)

Hereward's barbarian origin, often cited in this chapter, adds attraction to his physical and mental virtues, since it places him outside social constraints and

therefore hints at unrestrained sexuality, evoking the fascination for the barbarian which is a topos of invasion and domination in historical romance, particularly in the combination 'barbarian warrior – civilized princess'. From Gustave Flaubert's *Salammbô* to present-day commercial historical fiction, as a brief survey of the Mills and Boon historical romance list reveals,[3] the barbarian functions as an unbridled symbol of masculinity who, not bound by social conventions and manners himself, will help the heroine to liberate herself from socially imposed restrictions and experience passion and pleasure by submitting to his sexuality.

The sexual frisson between Ann and Hereward intensifies as the evening progresses. Anna is intrigued by the young Varangian and he is not indifferent to her.

> Anna was, or had very lately been, a beauty of the very first rank, and must be still supposed to have retained charms to captivate a barbarian of the north; if, indeed, he himself was not careful to maintain an heedful recollection of the immeasurable distance between them. Indeed, even this might hardly have saved Hereward from the charms of this enchantress, bold, free-born, and fearless as he was. (Scott 1831, 47)

In medieval chivalric romance young knights were often involved in adulterous affairs with married women. But the nineteenth-century paradigm of masculinity and romance had shifted, as we have seen, to one of self-restraint and prudence. Hereward is no Tristan or Lancelot to fall in love with Anna: she is the daughter of the emperor and wife of a noble prince, and 'reason and duty alike forbade him to think of [her] in any other capacity' (Scott 1831, 47). This wavering between attraction and resistance which characterises interactions between Anna and Hereward could be seen to reflect Scott's own ambivalence: attraction to the female historian's narrative power contrasted to his inability to think of her in any other capacity than as a vain female writer, and his refusal to recognise her authority as a writer of history due to her sex.

Although Hereward will not surrender to the charm of the woman, he will succumb to the influence of her writing. Once Anna begins to read, her historical account gradually asserts its power over him mentally and physically. Even though he resists at first and finds Anna's inordinate praise for her father or for other Greek leaders in the war ridiculous, listening with 'a smile of suppressed contempt', he is drawn into the story once Anna begins to write about the battle itself:

> He lost the rigid and constrained look of a soldier, who listened to the history of his Emperor with the same feelings with which he would have mounted guard at his palace. His colour began to come and go; his eyes to fill and to sparkle; his limbs to become more agitated than their owner seemed to assent to; and his whole appearance was changed into that of

> a listener, highly interested by the recitation which he hears, and insensible, or forgetful, of whatever else was passing before him. (Scott 1831, 55-6)

As the narrative moves towards an event which concerns Hereward personally – the description of his own brother's death on the battlefield - Anna's previously stated desire to affect his heart is fulfilled:

> As the historian proceeded, Hereward became less able to conceal his agitation; and at the moment the Princess looked round, his feelings became so acute, that, forgetting where he was, he dropped his ponderous axe upon the floor, and, clasping his hands together, exclaimed, — "My unfortunate brother!" (Scott 1831, 56)

Anna's narrative so completely captivates Hereward that he drops 'his ponderous axe', temporarily losing his masculinity owing to the power exercised on him by the female author. Anna's powerful narrative disarms and unmans him. Her domination over him is made manifest beyond doubt, although she does not boast of her conquest openly: 'The Princess said nothing, but was evidently struck and affected, and not ill-pleased, perhaps, at having given rise to feelings of interest so flattering to her as an authoress' (Scott 1831, 56). The scene reaches its climax in the gift of a ring which Anna bestows on Hereward as a token of her appreciation for his and his brother's services to her father, which he presses to his lips (Scott 1831, 57). The scene of sexual conquest is sealed with a symbolic marriage, as befits a happy-ending romance.

But this state of affairs cannot last. Nicephorus Briennius, Anna's husband, enters the room, bringing news of the coming crusaders, among whom there are many Normans, Hereward's old enemies. The climate shifts back to factual, not narrated war, which brings Hereward back to his senses. Even though he was so publicly and obviously affected by Anna's writing earlier, when he leaves the palace he acts as if a spell was broken. 'Looking back at the mass of turrets, battlements, and spires, out of which they had at length emerged, Hereward could not but feel his heart lighten […] He sighed and rubbed his hands with pleasure, like a man newly restored to liberty' (Scott 1831, 75).

Now that Hereward has removed himself from the influence of the compelling storyteller, he feels free to disavow her. He talks disparagingly of Anna's history as 'the prolix chat of a lady, who has written about she knows not what' and asserts that the knowledge he gained during that meeting, 'that the Normans are come hither to afford us full revenge of the bloody day of Hastings', was his 'recompense' for the tedious task of listening to her (Scott 1831, 75). By returning to the world of blood, revenge and battle, Hereward will make amends for his temporary lapse from his masculine performance and the 'fall' into a feminine position of displaying emotion and being overpowered by a woman's narrative.

Hereward will also reaffirm his virility and dominance in the sexual field. As he and his superior officer walk away from the palace, he is reprimanded for 'the somewhat overbold licence which thou tookest in thy gaze upon the Princess'. Hereward's answer is charged with sexual entitlement: '"So be it, in the name of Heaven", replied Hereward. "Handsome faces were made to look upon, and the eyes of young man to see with"' (Scott 1831, 76). Anna is divested from her authorial power and is now demoted to a mere pretty face; her intellectual gifts give way to her physical, feminine charms. Hereward's gaze reduces her to an object existing for his visual pleasure. He further objectifies Anna when he declares that he will fight anyone who 'dares detract from the beauty of the imperial Anna Comnena's person, or from the virtues of her mind' – the latter does not imply her intellectual strength, it is only conventional praise reserved for ladies. The man who was overpowered by Anna's narrative only a short time before, now claims that he cannot 'presume to form a judgement' about her history, for he does not understand it. He will judge her only for her beauty and for singing 'like an angel' (Scott 1831, 76). Anna is reduced to a decorative female whose presence and pleasing arts of singing (and perhaps some story-writing) would be acceptable, but pretensions to anything more intellectual dismissed as 'prattle'. Thus Hereward reasserts his masculine prerogative of defending powerless women, and re-establishes his dominant position, which was imperilled by the intellectual authority of the female historiographer. No wonder he feels he has escaped a sort of death, and is now free when he leaves the palace: '"Methinks the air of yonder vaults […] carries with it a perfume, which, though it may be well termed sweet, is so suffocating, as to be more suitable to sepulchrous chambers, than to the dwellings of men. Happy I am to be free, as I trust, from its influences"' (Scott 1831, 75)

Hereward's renouncement of Anna's power, viewed within the framework of the politics of sexual domination, reveals his fear of castration and consequent loss of power and submission. We saw earlier in the discussion of effeminate Greeks and virile Westerners how domination excludes equality and is confrontational by definition. The same principle is at work here. In the meeting between Hereward and Anna, it is made clear that although the effeminate Greeks accept being subordinate to women, as Nicephorus Briennius accepts Anna, the virile Westerners will not. Hereward will avoid Briennius's humiliation, or the terrible fate of the eunuchs, by renouncing Anna's power over him. According to thirteenth-century Byzantine historian Niketas Choniates, it is exactly this inversion of gender roles that brought on the ruin of the empire. Choniates, who admired Anna Comnena's wide education 'in philosophy and all sciences' (Choniates 15.9-10), presents her as a conspirator who tried to usurp the throne from the rightful heir, her brother John Comnenus, but the conspiracy failed largely due to Briennius's hesitation. Choniates disapproves of both what he saw as Anna's overbearing ambition, and her husband's passive and sluggish manner. He even shows Anna deplore the fact that it was Briennius to whom

nature gave a penis, whereas she only got a 'cleft' (Choniates 15.19-23). As Leonora Neville points out, Choniates tried to explain the conquest of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204 by blaming the policy of previous emperors, and in particular Alexius Comnenus, 'portraying [his] court as a locus of gender inversion and unnatural power relations' (Neville 2012, 22). Hereward recoils with horror at the possibility of being dominated by a woman, not only as a man but as a Westerner who cannot accept defeat and subjugation, and rejects such 'unnatural power relations', recognising their disastrous results on Greek men.

Most Western chronicles of the crusades, and in particular the First Crusade, repeatedly speak of 'effeminate Greeks' and, like Gibbon after them, praise the Turks' strength and vigour in war, in antithetical terms. The idea of Greek effeminacy must connect to the fact that the Greeks were weaker in armed conflict, losing most of Asia Minor to the Seljuk Turks, with the humiliating defeat of Manzikert in 1071 sealing their losses. Additionally, in the view of the West, Alexius Comnenus had betrayed the First Crusade by not participating in it personally with his army (Frankopan 2012, 193). Byzantium's contribution to the Crusade in the logistics and maintenance for the Western armies is ignored. As Matthew Bennett puts it, 'logistics never had much appeal as symbolic of masculine virtue, despite their essential nature. [...] The Greeks are judged solely on their 'half-century of defeats which they had suffered at the hands of the Turks' (Bennett 2002, 16-30). Masculinity is measured by a strong record of victorious wars and defeat is a mark of effeminacy, as it places the body of the vanquished man under the control of the victor, on a par with the female body whose 'natural' place is to be dominated. In Benjamin's theory on the erotics of sexual domination, masculinity is precisely defined in oppositional terms to this type of 'feminine', nurturing function, since masculine identity is formed via rejecting and objectifying the feminine (Benjamin 1984, 304-5).

In view of this definition of masculinity, it is hardly surprising that the Byzantines' vital help to the Crusaders in terms of food and equipment was not valued and they were not viewed as true allies and equals: it was the very nature of their contribution that proved their effeminacy. In the same way that '[m]ale hegemony in the culture is expressed by the generalization of rationality and the exclusion of nurturance, the triumph of individualistic, instrumental values in all forms of social interaction' (Benjamin 1984, 306), the rejection of nurture over violent domination in battle constitutes the hierarchy of values which privileges virile Westerners and demotes Byzantines to the position of feminine submission.

The many faces of Anna Comnena: damsel-in-distress, female warrior

In her second encounter with Hereward, Anna is fleeing from a dungeon, where her father keeps Ursel, an old former mercenary who had rebelled against his 'tyranny'. Alexius has concocted an evil plan to make Anna divorce her husband

and marry Ursel instead. The young woman, terrified, flees and seeks Hereward's protection from her father's wicked designs.

> "Dearest Hereward," said the lady [...] The alarm of the Princess, the familiarity of a beautiful woman, who, while in mortal fear, seeks refuge, like a frightened dove, in the bosom of the strong and the brave, must be the excuse of Anna Comnena for the tender epithet with which she greeted Hereward. [...] Exhausted as she was, she suffered herself to repose upon the broad breast and nervous shoulder of the Anglo-Saxon; nor did she make an attempt to recover herself, although the decorum of her sex and station seemed to recommend such an exertion. (Scott 2006, 277)

But Hereward does make an attempt and 'with the unimpassioned and reverential demeanour of a private solder to a Princess' asks her 'whether he ought to summon her female attendants'. Anna reads this as a rejection, as her reaction shows:

> "Do as thou wilt, barbarian", said the Princess, rallying herself, with a certain degree of pique, arising perhaps from her not thinking more *dramatis personae* were appropriate to the scene, that the two that were already upon the stage. (Scott 2006, 278)

Hereward realizes he has offended her somehow but cannot know why and does not 'presume to guess', and after handing Anna over to her attendants, goes back to duty, 'with the never-failing double-edged axe, the bane of many a Turk, glittering upon his shoulder' (Scott 2006, 279). His masculinity will never be in danger from Anna's seductions again. He resumes the chivalric role of the strong man who must save the weak woman, not only from her enemies but from herself as well. As a result, Anna may be a little piqued at first, but their final parting is not unfriendly: 'The obeisance which she made Hereward at parting, had something in it of haughtiness, yet evidently qualified by a look of friendship and regard' (Scott 2006, 279). She understands his prudence in rejecting what might be construed as her advances on him, or at least his not taking advantage of her temporary weakness. He is honourable and he has helped Anna to be honourable (she is married, let us remember) and to control her urges. She submits to his wisdom and returns to the world of female attendants and enclosed apartments, a perfect representation of the submissive, seductive feminine Orient. He goes on, the knight-errant, to subject the Turks to 'his glittering battle-axe', the apt embodiment of the dominant West. The female historiographer has accepted her subaltern position vis-à-vis the male hero, and the 'order of things', temporarily disturbed, is now restored.

However, Anna will not submit to this order of things, decided by others for her, for much longer. After the scene in the dungeons, and having benefited from Hereward's subtle nudging towards virtue, she decides that she must be a true wife and help her husband, who has fallen into disgrace. Owing to Anna

and her mother's joint intervention to the emperor, Briennius is finally pardoned for conspiring against Alexius. Once the son-in-law is absolved and restored to his office and position, Anna's father sends her off to the female apartments to see to her husband's needs. But Anna has had enough, and begins to nurse unexpected ideas. In a passage which at times evokes protofeminist literature, Anna decides that she wants to take her fate into her own hands:

> She became sensible that a woman of her extraordinary attainments, who had been by an universal course of flattery disposed to entertain an extraordinary opinion of her own consequence, made rather a poor figure when she had been the passive subject of a long series of intrigues, by which she was destined to be disposed of in one way or the other, according to the humour of a set of subordinate conspirators, who never so much as dreamed of regarding her as a being capable of forming a wish in her own behalf, or even yielding or refusing a consent. (Scott 2006, 323)

Anna does not dispute her father's authority and right to dispose of her so much, Scott goes on to say, as the fact that she, 'an authoress, a giver of immortality' has been used as a political pawn 'without her own consent'. Trying to find a way 'to obtain her chief desire, an illustrious station in history' (Scott 2006, 324), she comes up with the plan to replace her husband in the single combat in which he was challenged not by Count Robert, but by Robert's wife, Countess Brenhilda. Anna follows up on her plan at once, although not without qualms, as Brenhilda is a renowned female warrior. Vacillating 'between pride, or rather vanity [...] and the strong impulse of mortal fear', Anna eventually dons a 'warlike guise', 'a sample of those worn in western Europe by such amazons as Brenhilda' (Scott 2006, 325) and goes out to the lists in disguise (here Scott repeats the trope of the royal figure enlisting in the tournament in disguise which he employed in *Ivanhoe*). Anna's attempt to rise from her subordinate position into a state of self-determination is symbolically effected through her adoption of Western clothes and the Western ritual of single combat. Anna's resolution wavers many times; additionally, Brenhilda scorns her as a 'so contemptible a combatant' (Scott 2006, 337). But eventually Anna goes in, and fights - and against all hope and all probability, wins: as Brenhilda was about to strike Anna with a terrible blow, she 'stumbled and fell, without rising again' (Scott 2006, 341). Vexhelia, an old midwife, intervenes to explain to Anna that the Countess has fallen 'because she suffers under the heavy consequence of that primeval curse which was laid upon woman after the fall.' Anna orders that Brenhilda is looked after, in her delicate condition, 'as if she herself had been born in the purple' (Scott 2006, 342), to general applause from the audience.

What to make of this bizarre episode? Scott himself states that his purpose was 'to have produced some comedy' bringing together in this unusual way the amazonian Brenhilda (inspired, as he clarifies, by the historical figure of the

Italian-Norman Gaeta, wife of Robert Guiscard, whom Anna Comnena mentions with admiration in *The Alexiad*), and the high-spirited and proud Anna Comnena (Scott 2006, 364). For Scott, Anna's attempt to seize arms and thus attain glory is on a par with her attempt at historiography:

> That Anna Comnena should have caught the flame [of distinguishing herself in chivalry] is in no way inconsistent with the vainglory which induced her to affect the character of a historian, and by those who read her history with attention, it may be observed to be the ruling principle on which it has been written. (Scott 2006, 360)

Although Scott emphasises repeatedly Anna's vanity, following Gibbon, and considers her writing of history a pretension, we can detect some sympathy, and even compassion in his presentation of Anna, for example when she is trying to break free of her father's tyrannical power and to 'assert her dignity' (Scott 2006, 324). Moreover, the fact that Anna among all the Greek characters is the only one to overpower Western characters twice (the first time by narrating war, the second by performing it), even if her victories are ambivalent and transitory, cannot be incidental. In the final chapter of *Count Robert*, in which the author informs the reader of the fates of all the main characters, Scott abandons the fanciful constructions of Anna's fictional character and allows the historical Anna to speak for herself, quoting largely from *The Alexiad* (Scott 2006, 356-8). Anna has the last word on her own life and times, so to speak. Scott finishes his account of his historical characters, before proceeding to the fictional ones, with the ambivalent comment: 'These quotations [from *The Alexiad*] will probably give the readers as much as they wish to know of the real character of the Imperial historian' (Scott 2006, 359). Scott reserves his own judgment, or perhaps he is not quite sure what to make of Anna Comnena, given that for the length of the novel he has presented her in a variety of ways, none of which can be said to be definitive. The ambivalent, conflicting character of the fictional Anna Comnena could possibly be seen, as Lincoln says in his discussion of Scott's historical romances and their contradictions, 'as a precursor, a complex response to uncertain times' (Lincoln 2007, 220).

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1   Although the most recent convention in Byzantine studies is to use the Greek form of names, i.e. Anna Komnene, Alexios Komnenos, Nikephoros Bryennios, John Komnenos, I am using the Latin versions in this paper, in accordance to Sir Walter Scott's own practice.

2   Cadell's diary and letters offer a detailed account of his and Ballantyne's disapproval of the 'pregnant combat', in which Scott initially planned to set Brenhilda against Nicephorus Briennius but then replaced the latter by the 'capricious Anna Comnena, which hardly improved matters in [Cadell and Ballantyne's] eyes' (Alexander 2006, 398). In Cadell's own words, the episode 'cast a gloom over me which I cannot get rid of', 'it will injure all your work', 'It will chagrin and disappoint you', 'it is the incidents that are damning', 'a great fault', 'a great blot', 'I look to certain shipwreck if *it* remains as it is now' (in Alexander 2006, 398; the emphasis is Cadell's).

3   Some titles gleaned from the Mills and Boon website are indicative: *Bound to the Barbarian; Chained to the Barbarian; Tamed by the Barbarian; Betrothed to the Barbarian; the Barbarian's Bride*. https://www.millsandboon.co.uk/search.aspx?searchText=barbarian. Accessed January 17, 2016.